DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 427 CS 014 211

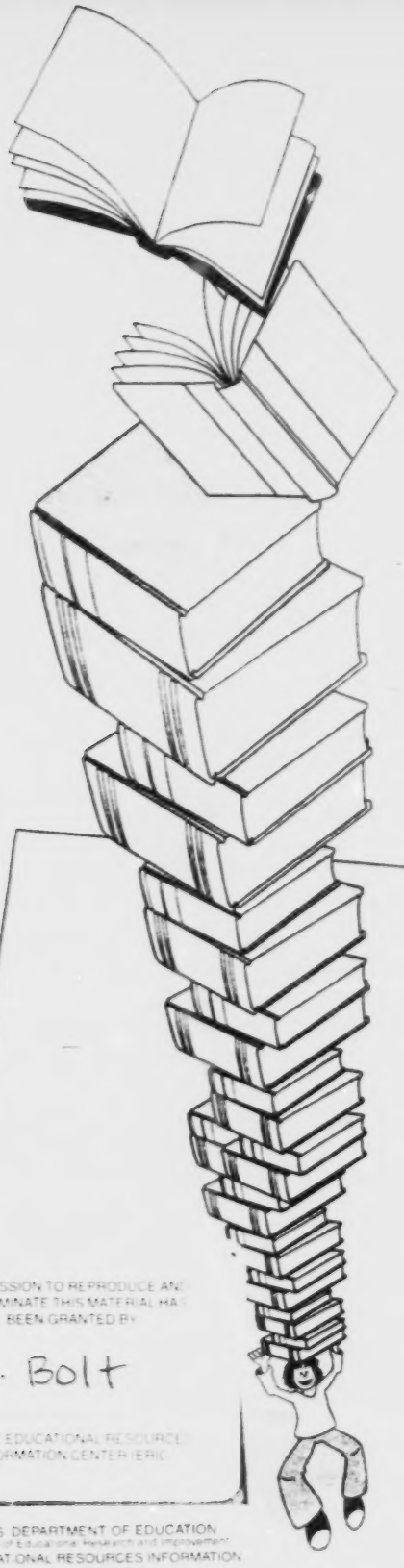
| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Benson, Laura, Ed. |
| TITLE | Colorado Reads! Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act: Thoughtful and Practical Responses. |
| INSTITUTION | Colorado State Dept. of Education, Denver. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Coalition for Goals 2000, Inc., Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | 2000-09-00 |
| NOTE | 170p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203-1704. Tel: 303-866-6600; Web site: http://www.cde.state.co.us. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC07 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Elementary Education; *Evaluation Methods; Learning Strategies; Oral Reading; Questioning Techniques; *Reading Achievement; Reading Difficulties; *Reading Instruction; Reading Writing Relationship; Special Education; *Student Evaluation; *Student Needs; Text Structure; Vocabulary Development |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Basic Literacy Act (Colorado 1996); Guided Reading Procedure; Phonological Awareness |

ABSTRACT

Sharing the wisdom of educators throughout Colorado in implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, this book is intended to be a practical complement to teachers' repertoire. It offers ideas for immediate implementation, along with citations of current research and references, and represents the best ways to respond to the needs of struggling students, ILP (Individual Literacy Plan) students, emergent students, proficient students, and advanced students. After a foreword and a summary of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, the first section of the book, Knowing Students and Individuals, discusses building a body of evidence, literacy continuum, running records, determining patterns of strengths and needs, when children do not progress in reading, a few "best ways" to prepare for the CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program), assessing special education students, and mapping literacy learning. The second section, Responding to Children's Needs--Teaching and Learning Strategies, addresses fostering the disposition to understand, the geography of strategy instruction, connecting reading and writing learning, cultivating independence in growing readers, using background knowledge, asking questions, determining importance, synthesizing, visualizing and sensing, phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, word learning strategies, guided reading, strategies for teaching text structures, kindergarten readers and writers, support for special education students and teachers, library resources, challenges in building and using bodies of evidence, and blessings, promises, and purposes for building and using bodies of evidence. An appendix provides forms for body of evidence data analysis and synthesis, individual reading assessment analysis tools, advice on whether to take an oral reading sample, and talking about student work. (Contains 84 references and a 42-item list of helpful Web sites.) (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

**Read in order to live.**
Cicero



# Colorado Reads!

**Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act: Thoughtful and Practical Responses**
September 2000

**A Project of**
**The Colorado Department of Education**
**In Support of Colorado Children, Teachers, Administrators, Parents, and Community Friends**
**Supported by Federal Goals 2000 Funds**
**Jan Silverstein, Supervisor, Competitive Grants and Awards, Colorado Department of Education**
**Laura Benson, Editor**

ED 448 427

CS 014 211

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Bolt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Dedicated to Dr. Stevi Quate**

In gratitude and honor of her wisdom and heart for the years of leadership and support she gave to all the teachers, children, and parents of Colorado as the Language Arts and Literacy Coordinator for the Colorado Department of Education.

*Alone we can do so little;*
*together we can do so much.*

*Helen Keller*

## Table of Contents


Foreword ..... VII
The Colorado Basic Literacy Act ..... IX

### Section I: Knowing Students as Individuals

Knowing Students As Individuals ..... 1
- Building a Body of Evidence ..... 3
  - Individual Reading Inventory ..... 3
  - CSAP Test ..... 3
  - Body of Evidence Essentials ..... 4

Literacy Continuum ..... 7
How Can Running Records Help Me Know My Students as Individuals? ..... 12
Analyzing Bodies of Evidence: Determining Patterns of Strengths and Needs ..... 15
- Checklists ..... 15
- Coding Strategies ..... 15
- Collegial Discussions ..... 16
- Analysis Tools ..... 16

When Children Don't Progress in Reading: The Big Three ..... 19
A Few "Best" Ways to Prepare for the CSAP ..... 20
- CSAP Released Items ..... 20

Assessing Special Education Students ..... 21
- ILP and IEP Comparison ..... 21
- What is an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)? ..... 21
- What is an Individualized Literacy Plan (ILP)? ..... 21
- Do Special Education students Need Individualized Literacy Plans When They Have Individualized Educational Plans (IEP)? ..... 21

Mapping Literacy Learning: Deciding What and How to Teach Our Students ..... 23
- Bibliography ..... 24

### Section II. Responding to Children's Needs — Teaching and Learning Strategies

Fostering the Disposition To Understand ..... 25
- What is a Strategy? ..... 25
- What is Strategy Instruction? ..... 26
- Portrait of Strategy Instruction ..... 27
  - Launching a strategy study ..... 27
  - Move to ..... 27
  - Provide ..... 27
  - Gradually ..... 27

The Geography of Strategy Instruction: Aligning Reading Instruction ..... 28
Connecting Reading and Writing Learning ..... 29
- Mapping the Content of Our Literacy Learning and Instruction ..... 29
- Constructing and Composing Strategies: Integrating Reading and Writing Strategy Instruction ..... 31

Cultivating Independence in Growing Readers ..... 32
Effective Literacy Teachers ..... 33
Modeling Literacy By Drawing From Our Well ..... 34
Monitoring Understanding ..... 36
Using Background Knowledge/Schema ..... 40
Defining Background Knowledge ..... 40
Self Talk for Using Background Knowledge ..... 40
Prompting Background Knowledge ..... 41
A Few Ways to Learn and Teach Strategy ..... 41
Books to Model and Practice Using Background Knowledge ..... 43
Asking Questions ..... 44
Defining Asking Questions ..... 44
Self Talk of Strategy ..... 44
Prompts for Questioning ..... 44
Ways to Learn and Teach "Asking Questions" ..... 45
Books for Strategy Study of Questioning ..... 45
Inferring: Seeing the Picture Before We Have All the Puzzle Pieces ..... 47
Defining Inferring ..... 47
Self Talk for Inferring ..... 47
Prompting Inferences ..... 48
Ways to Learn and Teach Inferring ..... 48
Books to Help Students Cultivate Inferring ..... 49
Determining Importance ..... 52
Defining Determining Importance ..... 52
Self Talk of Determining Importance ..... 53
Prompting for Determining Importance ..... 53
A Dozen Ways To Help Students Learn To Determine Importance As They Read ..... 54
Books to Cultivate Determining Importance ..... 55
Synthesizing ..... 57
Defining Synthesizing ..... 57
Self Talk of Synthesis Strategy ..... 57
Prompting for Synthesis ..... 58
Ways to Learn, Teach, and Practice Synthesizing ..... 58
Books to Develop Children's Sense of Synthesis ..... 60
Synthesis Out In The Big Wide World ..... 61
Visualizing and Sensing ..... 62
Defining Visualizing and Sensing ..... 62
Self Talk of Visualizing/Sensing ..... 62
Prompts ..... 62
Ways to Learn and Teach Strategy ..... 63
Books for Modeling and Practicing Visualizing/Sensing ..... 64
Phonological Awareness ..... 66
Fluency ..... 68
Suggestions for Teaching Fluency ..... 69
Vocabulary ..... 70
Word Learning Strategies ..... 73

Word Study Instruction ..... 73
Word Learning Activities ..... 73
Ways of Teaching and Learning ..... 74
Revealing Reading-Thinking *To* Our Students ..... 74
Reading *With* Students ..... 74
Reading *By* Students ..... 75
Grouping Practices ..... 76
Reading Nest Options ..... 77
Guided Reading Over Time ..... 78
Guided Reading Teaching Map ..... 79
Launching the reading ..... 79
Children independently read text ..... 79
Reinforcing strategies ..... 79
Responding to the text and rereading text ..... 79
Guided Reading Lesson Structure and Options ..... 80
Setting the Scene ..... 80
Children Read the Text ..... 80
Revisit Text/Responding to the Text ..... 80
Cement Learning/Closure ..... 80
Literacy Centers ..... 81
Creating Time for Literacy ..... 82
Daily Schedules: Sculpting Time for Literacy ..... 85
Strategies for Teaching Text Structures ..... 87
Learning About Text Structures ..... 87
Learning to Recognize Text Structures ..... 87
Teaching Text Structures to Readers and Writers ..... 88
Types of Text Structures ..... 88
Strategies for Exploring Text Structures ..... 88
Text Frames ..... 90
Reading in English: Helping English Language Learners Build on What They Know ..... 92
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills ..... 92
Early Grades ..... 92
Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency ..... 94
Special Considerations for Young Budding Readers in Kindergarten ..... 96
Kindergarten Readers ..... 98
Seeing Reading as a Part of Our Lives ..... 98
Choice and Variety ..... 98
Providing Thoughtful, Appropriate Invitations to Extend and Deepen Reading ..... 99
Response ..... 99
Time ..... 100
Kindergarten Writers ..... 101

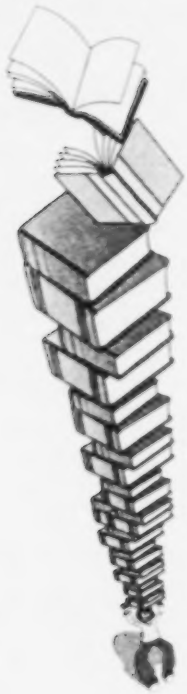
Living a Writerly Life ..... 101
Choice ..... 101
Exploring Genres ..... 102
Finding Writing Mentors ..... 102
Keeping Ongoing Collections of Writing ..... 102
Providing Thoughtful, Appropriate Invitations to Extend and Deepen Writing ..... 103
Time ..... 103
Response ..... 103
Support for Special Education Students and Teachers ..... 105
Why Do Special Education Students Have Difficulty Learning to Read, Write, and Spell? ..... 105
Existing Instructional Programs — Commercial ..... 107
Instructional Strategies for Special Education Students ..... 108
What Kind of Instruction Helps a Student With Reading Difficulties? ..... 108
General Resources ..... 109
Instructional Teacher Resources ..... 109
Library Resources, Supports, and Partnerships ..... 112
Standards in Action ..... 112
Additional Resources from Colorado State Library ..... 112
Information Technology ..... 113
Collaboration ..... 113
Flexible Scheduling ..... 113
Indirect Effects ..... 113
Other Useful Internet Sites ..... 115
Power Libraries: Linking School Library Media Programs and Standards to Student Achievement ..... 115
Colorado Virtual Library ..... 117
Challenges in Building and Using Bodies of Evidence ..... 119
Blessings, Promises, and Purposes for Building and Using Bodies of Evidence ..... 120
Guiding Questions ..... 121

## Appendix

Body of Evidence Data Analysis and Synthesis ..... 122
Body of Evidence Analysis ..... 124
Body of Evidence for ____Grade Readers ..... 125
Body of Evidence for ___ Grade Readers ..... 126
Analyzing Student Work ..... 127
Individual Reading Assessment Analysis Tools ..... 128
Individual Reading Inventories (IRI) ..... 128
Reading Conference Record ..... 129
Reading Conference Record ..... 130
Thinking About My Reading Strategies (Student Interview) ..... 131
Proficient Reader Profile for IRIs: Narrative Passages ..... 132
Analysis of IRI Data — 1 ..... 133
Analysis of IRI Data — 2 ..... 134
Analysis of Running Records ..... 135
Should You Take An Oral Reading Sample? ..... 136

Oral Reading Sample Window ..... 137
Rubric for Fluency Evaluation ..... 138
Talking about Student Work ..... 139
Student Work Conversation Protocol ..... 139
Student Profile ..... 141
Possibilities for Student Work Conversations ..... 142
Opportunity to Learn ..... 143
Student Work Conversations: Guiding Questions ..... 144
What I Learned About Myself as a Reader and Writer as I Studied my Body of Evidence ..... 145
Glossary ..... 146
Bibliography ..... 149
Informative Web Sites ..... 152

*No difference between assessment and instruction is ideal.*
*Sheila Valencia and P. David Pearson*



# Foreword

September 2000

Dear Readers of *Colorado Reads!*

**This is a love letter.**

This is a love letter to our children and for all those adults who make it their life's work to aid, nurture, and honor children. For all who help children grow and reach for their stars, we offer these words of support.

As the writers of *Colorado Reads!*, we crafted our efforts as colleagues who live your journey, understand the ever-growing demands and requirements placed on you, and believe in you. *Colorado Reads!* echoes our belief that we are all in this — the education of Colorado's children — together.

**This is a compass.**

We offer our words as affirmation and confirmation of your hard work. Additionally, we offer our words as clarity and support, reflecting your desire to continuously improve your expertise as teachers of growing readers, writers, and thinkers. In fact, we built each section of this book to respond to your most frequent and urgent questions.

Bringing many voices to our learning table, as the editor of *Colorado Reads!*, I asked colleagues throughout Colorado to share their wisdom with us (just as Stevi Quate did when we wrote *Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, 1998 — Colorado Reads!* is a bridge from that effort). Understandably, not everyone asked was able to join us.

I would like to honor these educators by thanking them for the gift of their time and heart in preparing material for this book. Without them, this book would not exist.

**Lori Conrad, MA**
Teacher and Staff Developer
Douglas County Schools, Public Education and Business Coalition,
and the University of Colorado at Denver

**Wendy Downie**
Staff Developer
Denver Public Schools

**Carrie Ekey**
Lead Literacy Resource Teacher
Jefferson County Schools,
Core Coordinator and Instructor
Regis Master's of Arts in Learning and Teaching

**Lynn A. Kuhn MA, CCC-SpL**
Speech/Language, Learning Disabilities, and Reading Specialist,
Multisensory Literacy Trainer, Facilitator and Consultant
Cherry Creek School District and Colorado Department of Education

**Pat Lusche**
Kindergarten Teacher/Reading Recovery Teacher
Creek Schools

**Bonnie F. McCune**
Library Community Programs Consultant
Colorado State Library

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Debbie Milner**
Denver Public Schools

**Sally Nathenson-Mejia**
Associate Professor, Literacy and Culture
University of Colorado at Denver

**Victoria P. Winterscheidt**

You will see the authors' names on the sections each wrote.

We would also like to thank these educators for their participation in the planning and direction of *Colorado Reads!*

**Frank Fielden**
Colorado Department of Education

**Robin Stranahan**
Douglas County Schools

**Carol Wilcox**
Denver Public Schools
University of Colorado at Denver

Thank you so much to each and every one who revised your last few summer weeks of family time or work commitments to join us in making this book possible.

Jan Silverstein's inspiration and Stevi Quate's vision launched the *Colorado Reads!* project. Kelli Roark managed the budget and paperwork throughout the process, and we thank her for her patient efforts. Bonnie Taher shepherded the publication through to the finished product.

## This is a tool.

We hope you find *Colorado Reads!* to be a practical complement to your teaching repertoire. We kept each section short and to the point. We built in ideas for your immediate implementation, along with citations of current research and references to encourage all "to read all about it." These are our best ways to respond to the needs of our struggling students, ILP students, emergent students, proficient students, and advanced students. For schools with a high number of tangled and struggling readers, we offer these words as dynamic answers to helping these students. All Colorado teachers will see themselves in our pages. We hope that the journey of reading this book brings edification, hope, clarity, affirmation, and honor to your work.

As you discover needed additions or revisions to this book, I encourage you to post them on the English/Language Arts listserv created by Stevi Quate (ela@web.cde.state.co.us). Additionally, you can find the manuscript for *Colorado Reads!* on the CDE Website (Fall 2000).

Thank you for all you do every day for our children. You are making a difference.

All the best,

**Laura Benson**
Editor, *Colorado Reads!*
Independent Literacy Consultant
and Staff Developer
Cherry Creek Schools

*The most important skill in reading*
*is believing I can read.*

*Bill Martin*

# The Colorado Basic Literacy Act

**House Bill 96-1139**

Laura Benson

Knowing that you have received previous documents (see *Implementing The Colorado Basic Literacy Act*, May 1998) and communications from the Colorado Department of Education about The Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) and that districts throughout Colorado have produced thoughtful descriptions of the bill, we will keep this section brief. We will share the intentions of this bill as they outline the major themes of *Colorado Reads!*

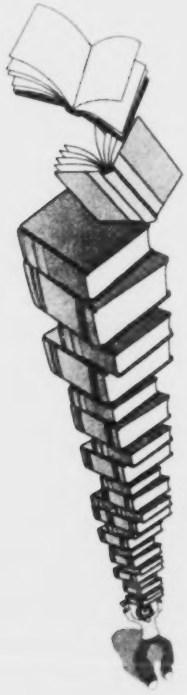
Key intentions of CBLA include:

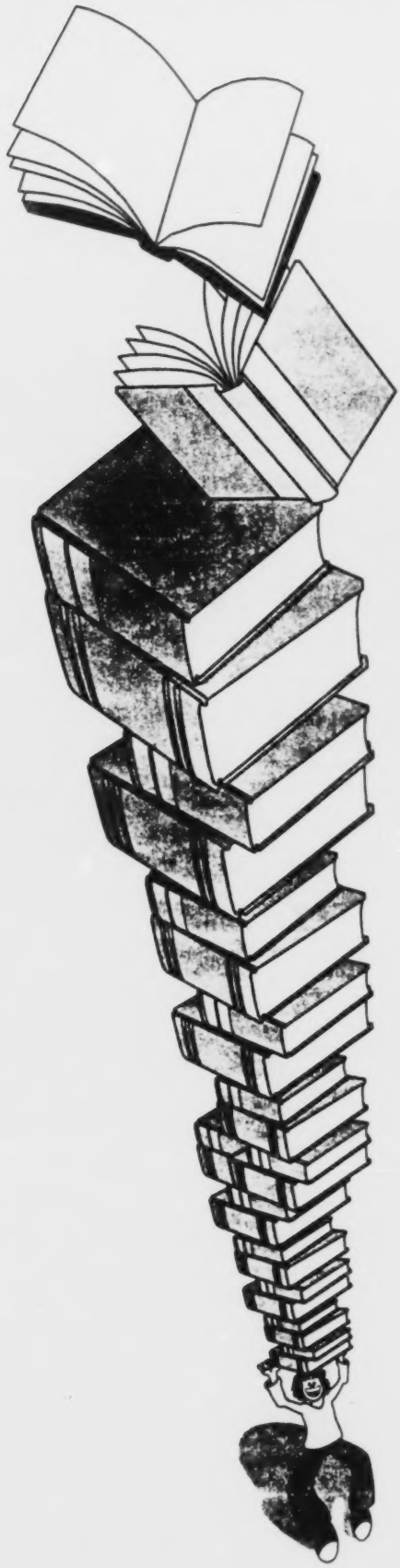
- Comprehension is the target of reading instruction and learning.
- Assessment informs and guides instruction.
- Constant monitoring of *all* our students as individuals is valued and practiced. For struggling readers, an Individual Literacy Plan (ILP) is developed charting a course of action by the school, parents, and student to enable the child to meet the Colorado state reading standards.
- Monitoring of individual students' progress is evaluated and determined by a body of evidence — collecting multiple pieces of evidence over time that "reflect the stages and complexity of reading development...yielding information about students' phonics skills and reading comprehension in relation to the proficiency levels" (as outlined in *Implementing The Colorado Basic Literacy Act*, May 1998).
- Interventions need to be in place in kindergarten through third grade for struggling readers — children who are *not* meeting the Colorado state reading standards.

In charting your school's course of action with regard to the CBLA, we encourage faculties to continue literacy learning and teaching conversations and share with one another what is working and what is difficult in implementing the CBLA. A few thoughts to consider as you launch or strengthen your efforts might include:

- What tools are you already using to monitor student growth? Begin your body of evidence work with these tools.
- What other tools do you need to monitor student growth and progress toward the Colorado state reading standards?
- To build a body of evidence, we currently...and we manage all this by...

As each of us have worked to implement and respond to the requirements of the CBLA, we are seeing great blessings and some serious challenges. Questions born from Colorado teachers created the request for *Colorado Reads!* We hope you find many answers to your questions in the following pages.





# Section I
# Knowing Students as Individuals

# Knowing Students As Individuals

Laura Benson

As educators, we have long understood the value of knowing our students as individuals. Our decisions about *what* to teach our students and *how* to help them "get there" are guided by our knowledge of each of our students. Our constant monitoring of our students' progress toward reading standards or district goals has always been a large part of a our daily routine and rituals. Our determination of a child's progress toward reading standards is most accurate and honorable when it comes by examining the child's *body of evidence* (a collection of student work over time). Just as the ability or worth of architects, ball players, and stocks is determined by many days or years of performance, we respect our students by determining their reading successes and/or struggles with a vast pool of information via each child's body of evidence.

The rules and regulations for the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) reflect our practice of knowing and monitoring individual students. The CBLA requires us to assess and evaluate student progress toward reading standards with a body of evidence created from regular classroom work, an individual reading inventory, and the Colorado Standards Assessment Program (CSAP). The purposes for a body of evidence are to:

- guide and inform our instruction
- know the student as a reader — determining patterns of strengths, needs, and passion for reading (including the child's motivation, purposes, and habits) — collecting and evaluating a child's use of strategies, skills, and behaviors
- evaluate and determine a student's progress toward the Colorado State Content Standards for Reading
- develop and communicate information to share with the child, his or her parents, and future teachers
- further articulation efforts about expectations at each grade level and develop consensus about normal, healthy progress at each grade level
- meet the requirements of The Colorado Basic Literacy Act (HB 96 — 1139)

To build a body of evidence for each student, we must consider what information we have and what information we need to add to their body of evidence of reading learning (this is very much a kindred spirit of portfolios). From everyday classroom work, we have a vast amount of data which helps us to understand the child as a meaning maker. In building a body of evidence, we want to harvest a cross-section of reading samples which can represent the child's multiple reading behaviors.

Consider the following questions to ensure that you have put the spotlight on many/enough areas of a child's reading:

- What more information do I need to guide my instruction of this student?
- What aspects of reading are addressed or highlighted in the child's current body of evidence?
- What do I need to add to this body of evidence to paint a full and rich portrait of this child as a reader, writer, learner, and thinker?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- What am I puzzled about concerning this child's reading? Which tools will help me learn more about this child and thus enable me to develop prescriptive and responsive instruction for this child?

Two sample portraits of the possible and required (italics) contents of a body of evidence follow (see Exhibits 1 and 2). Exhibit 3 reflects Marie Clay's ways of knowing students as individuals, and Exhibit 4 is a collection of questions to consider from Lois Bridges. These are offered to give you ideas for how to build a body of evidence for each of your students. Again, *a body of evidence means to collect artifacts of reading learning over time.*

Additionally, we have included a most important tool to add to bodies of evidence. On the following pages, you will find a thorough, research-based continuum developed by Carrie Ekey in collaboration with Bonnie Campbell Hill. Continuums are a vivid and practical way to articulate a child's progress over time. We highly recommend including continuums in each child's body of evidence to capture a portrait of the child's progress and growth. Continuums also give us a sound tool to synthesis a child's current body of evidence (see also *Analyzing Bodies of Evidence*, page 15).

**Exhibit 1**

## Building a Body of Evidence

Begin building — and continue to build — a body of evidence by collecting:

### *Regular classroom work*

- written response to reading such as reading logs; writer's notebooks; journals; advanced organizers; summaries; written retells; letters; exit cards; shadow writing; fiction and nonfiction "pattern" writing; and homework assignments
- comprehension/thinking strategy use documented via teacher observation/conference notes; advanced organizers; homework assignments, and any of the above written response tools
- sample pages of text read with comprehension/understanding
- cloze passages
- teacher-made tests
- running records
- conference record notes and anecdotal records
- oral response; talk; retellings; discussions
- artistic response — drawing, sketches, painting — documented in photographs — readers' theater
- developmental continuums

Don't forget to harvest information such as:

- reading surveys/student self-assessments
- parent surveys and letters
- previous reading work (giving historical perspective of reader)

Add:

### *Individual Reading Inventory*

- Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI-II) by Caldwell and Leslie
- Flynt-Cooter by Flynt and Cooter
- Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) by Johns

and then, include:

### *CSAP Test*

(Colorado State Assessment Program — Test of Reading Standards)

**Exhibit 2**

*Body of Evidence Essentials*

| **Regular Classroom and Assessments** | + | **CSAP Reading** (Grades 3-4) | + | **Individual Reading Assessment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oral response/talk | | | | *ORI-II* |
| Written response | | | | *Flynt-Cooter* |
| Artistic response | | | | *BRI (Jerry Johns)* |
| Running records | | | | |
| Conference record notes | | | | |
| Cloze passages | | | | |
| Homework assignments | | | | |
| Reading logs | | | | |
| Teacher-made tests | | | | |
| *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (K-2/3)* | | | | |
| *Observation Survey (K-1)* | | | | |
| Self-assessment/interest surveys | | | | |
| Parent insights | | | | |
| Developmental continuums | | | | |
| Historical artifacts | | | | |
| Some additional standardized tests you may choose to include are: | | | | |
| *Levels Test/NWEA*<br>*Iowa Test of Basic Skills*<br>*Terra Nova*<br>*Woodchock Johnson* | | | | |

**Exhibit 3**

An observant teacher must respond sensitively to the individual child's next step into new territory.

How can she do this?

- She must be familiar with what the child already knows.
- She must be close at hand as he reads and writes.
- She must know how to support his next leap forward.
- She must allow children enough space to be independent learners.

Such knowledge allows the teacher to guide literacy learning in individual children. The teacher must monitor the progress of individual school entrants otherwise her programme could be holding back the fast movers or dragging along those who approach literacy slowly and cautiously.

A teaching programme can be organized so that the teacher can

- observe how children are working and learning
- make and keep records
- monitor the progress of the competent children at spaced intervals
- monitor and guide the teaching of the less competent children at frequent intervals.

From *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* by Marie Clay, 1993

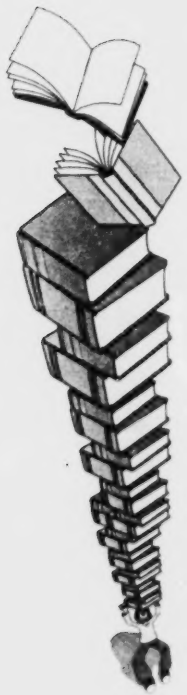
**Exhibit 4**

**Developing a Reading Profile**

- How much reading is the reader doing?
- Is the reader having trouble finding books to read?
- Is the reader sampling different genre?
- What kinds of books is the reader interested in?
- What books is the reader able to read on his or her own?
- How does the reader choose to share the books with others?
- Is the reader able to communicate in writing?
- Does the reader give opinions in his or her reading log?
- Are the opinions supported with example of details?
- Does the log indicate that the reader is understanding the texts he or she is reading?
- Does the reader give a synopsis or summary of the text?
- Does the reader relate to characters in the story?
- Does the reader analyze the text or the author's writing style?

From *Assessment: Continuous Learning*, Lois Bridges 1995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



# Literacy Continuum

Carrie Ekey

Learning is not an event. Rather it is a process that evolves over time, often in predictable stages. When a toddler is learning to walk, he first takes one step into a parent's arms; a few days later, he is toddling a few steps; soon he is walking across the room; and eventually, he is running around the house. Society recognizes the predictable benchmarks of this learning. Similar predictable benchmarks occur in the development of a child's reading and writing processes. Numerous authors and publishers have published these benchmarks in a continuum format. One continuum that has been widely recognized in Colorado was developed by Dr. Bonnie Campbell Hill in *Classroom Based Assessment*. In that book she reveals how a number of audiences can benefit from the use of developmental continuums.

One of those audiences is a state or a school district. When standards were first adopted in Colorado, they were written as developing over incremental stages for kindergarten through fourth grade, fifth through eighth grade, and ninth through twelfth grade. Teachers and school districts struggled with how to bring that back to specific age- or grade-level benchmarks. A continuum can help with that process by defining the incremental stages that a student passes through to attain those state benchmarks. Although the value of a continuum is that it details a road map for the developmental process a child progresses through at his own speed, school districts can predict at what grade level the stages will occur for most students.

Continuums are also useful tools for teachers in a variety of forums. A beginning teacher can use a one page continuum to develop an understanding of the big picture of the developmental stages the students will progress through in a year. It also provides a common language for teachers to use to describe specific behaviors they observe their students demonstrating. A continuum is a way for teachers to monitor not only what the student needs to work on, but also what the student is already demonstrating independently. Evaluation of those student behaviors on the continuum also provide the teacher with specific information to plan and guide instruction for the entire class as well as for small groups such as in guided reading. The focus is not on instructional strategies but rather on specific learning goals for the students. By evaluating student behaviors based on developmental stages, a teacher quickly understands how two to four developmental stages may be represented by the entire student population. It also becomes quite clear that some student displaying behaviors across two or more stages on the continuum.

The parent audience values receiving a continuum as a communication tool to understand specific behaviors at which their child is proficient. The continuum also provides specific next steps as student goals. These next steps can be a focus for the parent in supporting the student's literacy in the home. In some districts, the continuum replaces the traditional report card as a reporting tool.

The final, but probably most important, audience for the continuum is the student. It provides a road map for learning. Once a school or a district develops a continuum that clearly aligns to its standards, the continuum could also be rewritten in student language for student self assessment. The expected benchmarks need not be a guessing game for students but rather clear targets at which to aim. Self evaluation and goal setting will be supported through students monitoring their progress on the explicit targets or benchmarks of each developmental stage. A meta-analysis conducted by McREL, an education research laboratory in Colorado, in 1998 found a powerful correlation. Students who had a road map and who were clear about what they are to be learning achieved 33% higher on standardized measures.

Several continuums have been developed across the world. The following are some of the resources that are available to districts summarizing and implementing the research about developmental continuums:

- Education Department of Western Australia; *First Steps*, Heinemann
- Griffin, Patrick, Smith and Burrill, *The American Literacy Profile Scales: A Framework for Authentic Assessment*; Heinemann, 1995.
- Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Cynthia Ruptic and Lisa Norwick; *Classroom Based Assessment*, Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1998.
- Master, Geoff and Margaret Forster; *Developmental Assessment*; 1996, Christopher-Gordon Publishers.
- Ministry of Education, British Columbia; *Evaluating Writing Across the Curriculum (RB0020) and Evaluating Reading Across the Curriculum (RB0034)*; Crown Publications, 1996.

An example of a portion of a reading continuum from Bonnie Campbell Hill that has been aligned to our Colorado State Standards for English Language Arts is shown on the next page. (DRA refers to *Developmental Reading Assessment* authored by Joetta Beaver for Grades K –3, Celebration Press, 1997).

## Draft of Partial **Reading Continuum** (Mid First Grade through Mid Fifth Grade)

based on Colorado State Standards and Reading Continuum by Bonnie Campbell Hill

| | **Developing**<br>Ages 5 - 7<br>DRA Levels 8 - 12 | **Beginning**<br>Ages 6-8<br>DRA Levels 14 - 24 | **Expanding**<br>Ages 7-9<br>DRA Levels 28 - 34 | **Bridging**<br>Ages 8 - 11<br>DRA Levels 38 - 40 | **Fluent**<br>Ages 9 - 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
| Type of Text | • **Reads books with simple patterns**<br>• **Begins to read own writing** | • Reads simple early-reader texts<br>• Reads harder early-reader texts<br>• Reads and follows simple written directions with guidance<br>• Identifies basic genres | • Reads beginning chapter books<br>• Chooses, reads, and finishes a variety of materials at appropriate level with guidance | • Reads medium-level chapter books<br>• Chooses reading materials at appropriate level<br>• Expands knowledge of different genres<br>• Follows multi-step directions independently. | • Reads challenging children's literature<br>• Selects, reads, and finishes a wide variety of genres with guidance<br>• Begins to develop strategies and criteria for selecting reading materials |
| Standard 1 | • **Relies on illustrations and print**<br>• **Uses finger-print-voice matching**<br>• **Knows most letter sounds**<br>• **Recognizes simples words**<br>• **Identifies titles and authors in literature (text features)** | • Uses meaning cues (context)<br>• Uses sentence cues (grammar)<br>• Uses letter-sound cues and patterns (phonics)<br>• Recognizes many high frequency words by sight<br>• Begins to self-correct | • Uses reading strategies appropriately, depending on the text and purpose<br>• Uses word structure cues (e.g., prefixes, contractions, abbreviations)<br>• Begins to use meaning cues (context to increase vocabulary<br>• Self-corrects for meaning<br>• Begins to read aloud with fluency | • Reads aloud with expression | • Reads aloud with fluency, expression, and confidence. |
| Standards 1 and 4 and 6 | • **Begins to make meaningful predictions**<br>• **Retells main event or idea in literature**<br>• **Participates in guided literature discussions** | • Retells beginning, middle, and end with guidance<br>• Discusses characters and story events with guidance | • Summarizes and retells story events in sequential order<br>• Responds to and makes personal connections with facts, characters, and situations in literature<br>• Compares and contrasts characters and story events<br>• "Reads between the lines" with guidance | • Discusses setting, plot, characters, and point of view (literary elements) with guidance<br>• Responds to issues and ideas in literature as well as facts or story events.<br>• Makes connections to other authors, books, and perspectives.<br>• Participates in small group literature discussion with guidance. | • Begins to discuss literature with reference to setting, plot, characters, and theme (literary elements), and author's craft.<br>• Generates thoughtful oral and written responses in small group literature discussions with guidance.<br>• Begins to demonstrate understanding of challenging vocabulary in discussions and written response.<br>• Begins to gain deeper meaning by "reading between the lines." |
| Standard 5 | | • Learns information from reading and shares with others. | • Identifies chapter titles and table of contents (text organizers) | • Uses resources (e.g., encyclopedias, CD-ROMs and nonfiction texts) to locate and sort information with guidance.<br>• Gathers and uses information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps with guidance | • Begins to use resources (e.g., encyclopedias, articles, Internet, and nonfiction texts) to locate information.<br>• Gathers information using the table of contents, captions, glossary, and index (text organizers) independently.<br>• Begins to use resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) to increase vocabulary in different subject areas. |

All of these ingredients give us the vital, vivid information we need to determine a student's progress toward the reading standards.

Again, in building a body of evidence for each of our students, the first well we draw from is regular classroom work. In other words, what we do every day with our students and the ways in which they go public with their reading understanding are the places to start in building bodies of evidence. This is a critical practice as it is this part of the body of evidence which helps you determine your next steps — for instruction and for assessment. Deciding what we need to collect next is clarified by what already we know and have witnessed about the student as a reader (again, from everyday classroom life). Furthermore, our knowledge about our students as individuals helps us make decisions about which assessment tools to bring into a child's life (i.e., individual reading inventories, additional standardized tests, etc.).

**A Portrait: Catherine**

Through regular classroom work I saw that one of my students, Catherine, was struggling to comprehend non-fiction text. Wanting to know why and how I could help her, my next steps in assessing and evaluating Catherine (getting to know her more deeply as a reader) were to target her use of comprehension strategies (such as determining importance, inferring, and synthesizing) as she reads the several landmark nonfiction books (books which I know my students can comprehend at a certain point in the year of a particular grade level). I talked about her thinking of these pieces and we read several expository passages of an Individual Reading Inventory (such as the Qualitative Reading Inventory/QRI-II or Flynt-Cooter *Reading Inventory for the Classroom*). Needing more information about a student's strategies, skills, or behaviors as a reader, I know that I will need more and different information than regular classroom work, and thus I will use different diagnostic tools to help me know this student's reading strengths and needs. Deciding which other tools to use takes thought and reflection.

Catherine's body of evidence grew in details when I administered the Flynt-Cooter and, later, interviewed her about her independent reading of nonfiction texts. While reading several of the expository passages in the Flynt-Cooter, I witnessed Catherine's command of many sight words and intonation (indicating her understanding of punctuation as she reads). This was corroborated as I conferred with Catherine and talked with her about her independent reading. That was the good news. The worrisome news was revealed in Catherine's retellings and comprehension of the passages, which indicated vast confusions and stumbles with understanding the main ideas and themes of each piece. Thus, while Catherine sounded like a reader, she wasn't truly reading these passages — because understanding, as you well know, is what it's all about. In developing a course of action to minister to Catherine's needs from her strengths, I made sure that Catherine was reading easy-level text most of the time (Allington's advice of engaging our students in easy level reading 80% easy reading as my guideline). As I launched each strategy study and content area learning focus, I gave Catherine short pieces of narrative text (moving gradually to more challenging fiction text and to nonfiction text) to read and kept her with me for more modeling, more groups, and checked in with her more often via conferences.

The first strategy I wanted to strengthen in Catherine was Monitoring Understanding. Luckily, she knew that reading should make sense. She just didn't have enough tools to help her through the breakdowns in meaning. Repairing her confusions was easier as time went along because 1) I showed her how I fixed my own misunderstandings as I read, 2) I kept her in her most comfortable genre and easy-level text during her independent reading time until she gained other reading

strategies such as inferring and using her background knowledge, and 3) I had her tutor younger students at our school to give her opportunities to practice and articulate her thinking tools (nothing teaches us like a teaching assignment) and build her confidence. She could walk back into her classroom with any book under her arm — even a very "baby book" — and not lose face because her books were the books she read and shared with her tutoring students.

With massive amounts of time to read independently, careful book matching, being in an apprenticeship with me as I modeled ways of understanding in various genres, teaching younger students, and reading with other peers in book clubs and guided reading groups, Catherine's body of evidence demonstrated tremendous growth by the end of the year. So deep was her progress, she was determined to be "on grade level" and able to meet the Colorado state reading standards by the end of fourth grade. She continues to give me hope when working with other struggling or tangled readers.

No assessment tool is perfect. There are caveats to the oral reading sample we take in our conferences and other assessment experiences with our students. And yet as Peter Johnston writes in *Knowing Literacy* (1997), "Mature reading is generally done silently in the privacy of one's own head. This is not a problem for self-evaluation, but is poses a bit of a problem for teachers who wish to assess their students' reading... Oral reading has been used for many years to assess the kind of language processes taking place in the head of the reader. This assessment can be only estimate of the reader's mental processes, however. Oral reading and silent reading are not the same thing (Leu 1982; Schumm and Baldwin 1989). The two serve quite different functions for adults. Nonetheless, there is sufficient similarity between the two to make analyzing students' oral reading a useful way to understand the way they process language when they read." As we use IRIs and running records, it is important to keep Johnston's words in mind.

Additional points about using running records follow. See also the tools in the Appendix.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# How Can Running Records Help Me Know My Students as Individuals?

Debbie Milner

Taking a running record as a child reads offers valuable information about that child's understanding, not only of that text but also of the reading process itself. Sometimes a teacher may do a quick running record to see if the student is selecting appropriate books for independent reading or to see if the student is using a strategy discussed in the previous day's Guided Reading group. However, it is important that the teacher sometimes take the time to dig deeper into what the running record reveals about the student's pattern of strengths and needs in reading. This analysis will give the teacher direction in providing more effective individualized instruction to that student. The following questions will help you to reflect more deeply on what you have learned about your students.

What should I use as a text for a running record? The text may be an "unseen text," such as the Developmental Reading Assessment, or a "seen text," such as a book the student is reading during Reading Workshop, or a Guided Reading book that was read the day before. Unseen text is usually used for maintaining accountability and for determining the student's independence with strategies, while seen text helps you to make ongoing instructional decisions and analyze your instruction.

What information should I be looking for as I examine the running record?

1. Is the text at the appropriate reading level for the student? The general guidelines for reading levels are: 95-100% accuracy for independent reading and 90-94% for instructional reading.

2. What cues does the student pay attention to when reading? When the student miscues, does it still make sense (Meaning) and sound right (Structure)? What level of graphophonic (Visual) cues is the student using – beginning letter sounds, ending sounds, sight words, chunks, vowel patterns? Is the child sacrificing Meaning by overattending to Visual cues?

3. When the student comes to something difficult, what strategies does he use? Does the student reread, cross-check with other cues, self-correct, work on the word, ask for help?

How do I know if the student comprehended the text? Frequently, the child's behavior during reading may give evidence of comprehension — e.g., the student self-corrects for meaning, substitutes words that make sense, reacts to the story, or reads with fluency and expression. You may also want to ask the student to retell the story or confer with the student about the text and the comprehension strategies they might have used during reading. Asking what questions the child had in mind while reading or whether the child mentally pictured any parts of the text will help you to assess the child's comprehension.

How can I use this information in my instruction? This information will help you to:

1. Match students with text that is appropriate for their level. Emergent readers especially need to be reading books that will allow them to use all cues together when they read.

2. Model and prompt for strategies that the students need to learn. Modeling of strategies may take place at any time during the day: during Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, focus lessons for Reading Workshop, content reading, Daily News, etc. Consistency in talking about strategies across different types of reading will encourage students to generalize the strategies.

3. Select specific teaching points that are just what certain students need to learn next. For example, if you find that four of your students tend to sit and wait for you to tell them the words they don't know, you could bring them together as a group for a couple of weeks and discuss some options for what they can try when they come to a tricky word. Another group of students may need to come together for instruction on using word patterns and chunking for difficult words. Another group may need to work on retelling the story or determining the most important information.

4. Analyze your own instruction. The strategies your students use are often a reflection of what you emphasize, whether or not you are aware of it.

Running records are a useful tool for knowing your students better as readers. Incorporating running records into the school day is not always easy, but it will be well worth the time as you seek to provide individualized instruction to meet the needs of all of your students.

* * * *

Laura Benson

Many of our students' body of evidence collection of regular classroom work makes clear that they are comprehending what they are reading in class, so the need for additional assessments is minimal. Our puzzling students require more of our time and contemplation. It is the children I am puzzled about that I will need to spend more time with — both in the creation and analysis of their body of evidence as well as the employment of additional assessment tools.

As you and your colleagues build and use bodies of evidence, the value of these collections of work is clear. You will want to talk with one another about "Now what? Now, that we have this information, what do we do with it and how do we manage it?" Later questions for your consideration include:

- What are you/we learning by using bodies of evidence?
- What pieces of evidence are the most helpful? What pieces of evidence, if any, are not that helpful in getting to know students as individuals?
- What more do we need to know about our students? Is what we currently harvest (in students' bodies of evidence) enough?...too much?
- What patterns of strengths and needs does each child's body of evidence reveal?
- Do the children's patterns give us a road map for our own learning — helping us know where we should take our professional development efforts?
- How much information is enough?
- What can I prune from this child's body of evidence? When should I prune?
- How are the parents of our students responding to their children's bodies of evidence? How are we making parents part of the construction of their children's body of evidence?
- When and where are we including student voices in the children's bodies of evidence?

Additionally, share with one another the practical aspects of knowing students as individuals and managing bodies of evidence. For example, I keep my students' bodies of evidence in one three to four inch binder with a divider for each child (some people call this their monitoring notebook). Placed on my desk right next to a three hole punch, I can easily gather pieces of evidence throughout the day and week. *Regular classroom work is my most frequent harvest for literacy artifacts.* This makes the construction of bodies of evidence efficient, meaningful, and authentic. When a child makes a breakthrough in his or her reading, I will document this milestone with my conference notes and/or copy a page or two from the child's successful

reading. If a child seems to have consistent difficulty in retelling what he or she has read, I will note that, store that information in the child's body of evidence, and use this insight as I craft next steps of learning for this child. Numerous tools for harvesting children's reading thinking can be found in Bonnie Campbell Hill's *Classroom Based Assessment* and Lynn Rhodes and Nancy Shanklin's *Windows Into Literacy: Assessing Learners K-8* (1993) and *Literacy Handbook: A Book of Instruments* (1993).

Designating *a focus child* each day is another helpful practice. Choose a student as your focus child from your large group (entire class) *or* one student from one of your small groups (during guided reading groups for example). With my focus student, I might interview this child (in a conference) about reading choices or how our study of a particular thinking/comprehending strategy guides understanding as reading progresses; engage the child in an individual reading inventory; and/or take a running record — all while my other students are reading independently. With one focus child *a day*, by the end of the week, I will have more information about five of my students. With a focus child *for each of my groups*, I will often have detailed information about ten to fifteen of my students by the end of the week. Thus, by the end of the month, each child's body of evidence grows in depth and breadth.

# Analyzing Bodies of Evidence: Determining Patterns of Strengths and Needs

Wendy Downie and Laura Benson

All over Colorado, teachers are collecting samples of students' work and compiling them into bodies of evidence to meet the requirements of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. These bodies of evidence give teachers needed information about their students as individuals and illuminate patterns of student reading behaviors, helping us determine areas of strengths and needs. As we come to know each and all of our students more deeply with a myriad of tools and practices and see these patterns of performance emerge, we are better able to forge our plans for student learning. In analyzing student work, teachers can look for evidence of a range of behaviors, such as a student's use of strategies, progress over time, and application of strategies and skills in new settings. The difficulty lies in organizing the information in ways that encourage patterns to emerge.

### *Checklists*

Teachers often develop checklists to summarize information in students' bodies of evidence, updating them when new information is added. For checklists to be effective, instructional goals need to be clearly defined and decisions about what is evidence and how it is collected need to be established. Some of the many considerations in developing checklists include:

- What information should be collected?
- Is it reasonable to collect the amount of information expected?
- How often should checklists be updated?
- Should evidence be collected from different sources?
- Should evidence be coded or scored for quality?
- When is time available for teachers to analyze the checklist information?
- What and how much evidence is needed to determine a student's achievement of an instruction goal?

In many districts, checklists are being developed centrally or at the building level to standardize the collection process. In other districts, teachers create their own checklists to track student progress toward goals identified on a child's Individual Literacy Plans. Organizing checklists, along with the other data in bodies of evidence, in one place (a monitoring notebook, for instance) enables teachers to determine patterns of student strengths and needs more easily.

### *Coding Strategies*

Sometimes, a less structured approach in analyzing student work results in finding unexpected patterns. Many teachers are familiar with using running records to study the reading behavior of beginning readers. A teacher codes and analyzes student miscues to determine how a student solves problems that occur while reading. By analyzing the student's miscue behavior over a range of text, the teacher can determine which reading strategies are used efficiently and which strategies are in need of support.

The process used for coding and analyzing running records can also be used to look for patterns in other areas of reading. Coding systems can be created to organize evidence of behaviors, such as the use of comprehension/thinking strategies, text connections, or self-corrections. For

example, samples from students' literature logs can be coded for evidence of questioning and inferring.

### *Collegial Discussions*

Another powerful way to look for patterns of strengths and needs is by discussing student work with other teachers. Many schools organize time for teachers to work together for the purpose of studying individual students' bodies of evidence. With each teacher bringing a unique perspective in understanding and interpreting student work, all participating teachers are enriched by the experience. Some schools have adopted specific protocols which guide teachers in the conversation and analysis of a student's body of evidence. We have also included the Student Work Conversation protocol Laura Benson developed (adapting the work of colleagues and friends at Harvard University's Project Zero). We encourage you to make Student Work Conversations a part of your culture by embedding these into your faculty meetings. Sharing our wisdom as we analyze our students' work is powerful, strengthens articulation efforts, paints a vivid portrait of what a "good reader" looks like, and will make your solo analysis journeys stronger.

### *Analysis Tools*

In the Appendix of *Colorado Reads!*, we have included various analysis tools to support your work as you examine your students' bodies of evidence. While we most often do this analysis alone, we encourage you to share the analysis of bodies of evidence with your colleagues. This is especially helpful and clarifying in reflecting upon puzzling students — children who are struggling to make progress or students who are doing so well that we may be baffled as to how to help them. To this end, we again encourage you to engage in Student Work Conversations with your colleagues and use the attached tools found later in *Colorado Reads!*

In addition to the attached tools, see "How can running records help me know my students as individuals?" (page 12), which discusses the use of running records, as a compass to guide our teaching decisions.

As we examine a child's body of evidence, a pattern of performance is revealed when the child demonstrates a behavior consistency. In other words, we can't consider a behavior or characteristic to be a pattern unless this behavior or characteristic shows up often in the child's body of evidence.

The following are a few portraits likely to emerge from a healthy class of children at every grade level. These notes are adapted from Connie Weaver's work in *Practicing What We Know* (1998).

| Reader's Behavior | Possible Evidence | Teaching Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Reader does not seem to know that reading should make sense. | • Seems to read word by word<br>• Miscues often do not fit with the following grammar or meaning<br>• Reader expresses surprise when asked to tell what the reading selection was about<br>• Reader makes non-word miscues | • Model your ways of making sense; reveal rereading to and with child/children<br>• Read to children often<br>• Preview/picture walk of text in Shared Reading and/or Guided Reading nest<br>• Use language experience/dictation<br>• Tape record child's running record and ask "Does that make sense?" at a miscue; invite child to reread text |

| Reader's Behavior | Possible Evidence | Teaching Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Reader doesn't consistently use background knowledge to predict | • Miscues often don't fit cues in text<br>• Reader can't express or guess what will happen next in story<br>• Reader is not connecting with the text (via talk, writing, or artistic responses<br>• Reader struggles to understand the plot (fiction)<br>• Reader is using previous class experiences to help him understand ""this" text | • Cultivate habits of calling up what child already knows by modeling and talking about *"this reminds me of..."* and, later, *"I bet...," "I knew it..."* Encourage saying aloud, mapping out or drawing what the child already knows about the topic, author, genre, etc.<br>• Make sure the child knows this is an important tool which good readers use, and encourage child to use the picture walk strategy when reading in bed at night independently |
| **Reader's Behavior** | **Possible Evidence** | **Teaching Strategies** |
| Reader lacks self-confidence | • Reader says "I can't read this," or "I don't want to read this."<br>• Not often risk-taking<br>• Not attempting through new or tricky parts of text<br>• Few self-corrections<br>• Reader gives up easily<br>• Body language seems to reveal a sense of defeat<br>• Asks for teacher assistance often<br>• Has difficult selecting text | • Ensure that thoughtful book matching is employed — is this a book the child can and wants to read?<br>• Connect child's reading with passions and previous experiences and/or genres of success<br>• Talk with child about how you use reading in your life and how it makes a difference<br>• Use the child's own writing for reading text periodically<br>• Engage child in Readers' Theater, plays, and improv of pieces read (poems work well)<br>• Use Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Literature Circles, and/or Book Clubs experiences with child |

J. David Cooper's *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning* (1997) provides another lens for looking at student work and determining possible patterns of performance. Adapting Cooper's thoughts, consider the following questions while you examine one of your more puzzling students' body of evidence.

- **Nature of the Difficulty**
  What is the nature of the child's difficulty?
  Is the problem one of understanding the text or of decoding the words?

- **Text**
  Is the reader's difficulty in one genre or several genres?
  Are the texts the child reads clearly written?

- **Background Knowledge**
  Does the reader have sufficient background knowledge for the text being read?

- **Vocabulary**
  Does the reader know the key-concept vocabulary needed to construct meaning from the texts?

- **Thinking Tools**
  Can the reader employ comprehension strategies?
  Which ones are strengths? Which ones are needs?
  Which ones has the child not yet had the opportunity to learn?

- **Cueing Systems**
  How is the reader using the cues in the text (meaning, syntax, and visual/graphophonics)?

From our analysis of a child's work, we then think about the child's (possible) **Pattern of Difficulty**. In other words, do we see a pattern of difficulty or is what we see an isolated event of difficulty? Again, it is the patterns which are critical. This is one reason that one piece of information in the child's body of evidence is not as significant as the sum of the information. **One piece of information, even the child's CSAP, does not carry more weight than another piece of information or data in determining a child's reading proficiency**. What counts is the illumination of patterns born from the child's body of evidence. In determining a child's progress toward the Colorado state reading standards, do what you have always done as thoughtful teacher — use many pieces of information to make your decision. Whether we called student work collections body of evidence, portfolios, or cum folders, we have long known that we must base a child's achievement and growth on a collection of his or her work.

As we work with schools in Colorado and around the country, we see brilliance and rigor radiating throughout each community. Teachers, children, principals, and parents are working hard and their efforts are making a difference. It is clear to see vast patterns of achievement. The tangible proof of the integrity and worth of these efforts is in each school's bodies of evidence and in the words of the children as we talk with them about their reading.

If you determine that a child or group of children are not making the expected progress, the reasons are complex. This issue requires our reflection and dialogue.

As Richard Allington writes, "There is no quick fix...no silver bullets" (1995). Literacy learning is mysterious and wondrous. And yet we can confidently say that we see a pattern of cause and effect emerging from our analysis of thousand of bodies of evidence. When children don't make progress in reading (in this time of numerous factors which are beyond our control), there are things we *can* do to help children grow as readers. On the following page, we share the most frequent reasons why children don't make progress as readers and outline what we can do to turn these around.

# When Children Don't Progress in Reading: The Big Three

Laura Benson

When children aren't making progress in reading, it is frequently due to three factors. As you examine your students' bodies of evidence and talk with one another about their progress or tangles as readers, ask yourself and one another about the following critical issues:

1. **Modeling**
   How much reading modeling has the child received? To learn a new skill, learners of all ages need mentors. We all need modeling of the task we are being asked to perform. How much apprenticeship has the child been offered? Growing readers need someone who not only assigns reading but someone who describes, names, and demonstrates HOW to read text of all genres. Grant Wiggins says, "In order for students to do excellent work, they must know what excellent work looks like." How are we helping our children to know what excellent work in reading looks like? Reveal to your students all your ways of knowing and understanding — your reading *strategies* (see our next section) — as well as your reasons for reading. Help them know that reading is worth the hard work. (See *Strategies That Work* by Harvey and Goudvis; *On Solid Ground* by Taberski).

2. **Time**
   How much time does the child read each day and each week? Does the child read outside of school? Numerous studies document, and common sense dictates, that in order to grow as readers, children need to be spending massive amounts of time reading independently. Our students should be spending most of the literacy block "in the game" actually practicing their reading by doing it. Do you audit the time your students spend reading? Does it add up to an hour a day or more? If not, revise your schedule to ensure that each and every student is immersed in reading. See our notes about time in the next section of *Colorado Reads!* and the work of Stephen Krasen, Richard Allington, and the CIERA (Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement ) Web site (www.ciera.org/ciera) for research about the importance of time.

3. **Book Matching**
   Is the child reading books he or she can understand? Is the child reading books he or she wants to read? The most frequent book selection pattern of struggling readers is choosing books which are too hard. Richard Allington, co-author of *Classrooms That Work* and *Schools That Work*, writes that children need to be reading easy-level text eighty percent of the time. Like the green slopes in skiing, engaging children in reading easy-level text gives them the best opportunities to practice and employ their comprehension and new word strategies. Green slopes give us the practice time to become stronger and more skillful. Too often, children are reading in their "black slopes" and meaning does not come — but frustration often does. Putting our energies to a) knowing our students as individuals, and b) knowing a lot about books are two critical practices of effective literacy teachers. See CIERA Web site for numerous research references, and Fountas and Pinnell's *Matching Books to Readers*.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# A Few "Best" Ways to Prepare for the CSAP

Laura Benson

Students who do well on the CSAP:

1) **Know that reading is understanding**
Knowledge of comprehending strategies is critical

2) **Spend massive amounts of time reading books** at their easy level, ensuring many opportunities to apply their comprehending strategies.
Audit your schedule and ask, "How much time each day and each week are my students reading text independently?" Allington suggests that students spend 80% of their time reading easy-level text.

3) **Read from many genres**

4) **Have mentors in their lives who reveal *how* to read**, explaining and demonstrating how to make sense/create meaning from a variety of genres

5) **Have access to reading materials**

6) **Write often**
Children's self-generated writing, along with some teacher selected topics, "cross-fertilizes" and strengthens their growing reading capacities.

7) **Engage in reading with their parents/family members**

8) **Attach joy and/or purposes for their own reading**

*Many children learn to read by the time they are seven or eight years old;*
*but to become truly literate, they will go on learning to read throughout their lives.*

Moira McKenzie in *Guided Reading* by Fountas and Pinnell

*CSAP Released Items*

| THIRD GRADE<br>Thinking Strategies Required and Assessed | FOURTH GRADE<br>Thinking Strategies Required and Assessed |
|---|---|
| **Determining Importance**<br>• Fact recall<br>• Main idea<br>• Explain how/why<br>**Synthesizing**<br>• Sequence<br>• Retell<br>**Inferring**<br>• Interpreting<br>• Explain why<br>• Draw inferences<br>**Sensory Imaging/Visualizing**<br>• Visualize/picture to comprehend | **Determining Importance**<br>• Fact recall<br>• Main idea<br>• Accessing information<br>• Using graphics or pictures to comprehend<br>• Compare characters<br>• Compare two pieces<br>• Story elements<br>**Synthesis**<br>• Sequencing<br>• Summarize<br>• Compare characters<br>• Compare two pieces<br>**Using Background Knowledge**<br>• Definition/vocabulary<br>• Story elements<br>**Inferring**<br>• Drawing inferences |

**Note**: *All* thinking/comprehending strategies are needed to understand and respond, but the above are emphasized in the CSAP.

# Assessing Special Education Students

Lynn Kuhn

### *ILP and IEP Comparison*

Teaching every child to read is probably the single most important task of our elementary schools. Recent research supported by the U.S. Department of Education has emphasized that if children do not master the skills and understandings of literacy in their first three years of school, they are certain to encounter difficulties throughout their schooling. While it is undeniable that many children have reading disabilities, it is also true that many reading problems could be averted with proper instruction. Therefore, instructional decisions and adjustments to the curriculum must be based on objective and authentic assessments of student progress over time.

### *What is an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)?*

An Individualized Learning Plan defines specifically the child's strengths and the areas of concern. It establishes written learning goals which focus attention for remediation by the teachers, parents, and student. These individuals share responsibility for raising the child's level of performance to the District and State standards. An ILP is a working document required for any district student who is at risk of not meeting the standards at a Proficient Level. The ILP states the at-risk status and outlines evidence supporting the judgment. It provides information about the student's strengths and lists strategies that parents, the student, and teachers will use to bridge the deficit. The plan documents that the parents and student were notified, demonstrates joint responsibility for remediation, and provides information for the next teachers.

### *What is an Individualized Literacy Plan (ILP)?*

The Colorado Basic Literacy Act requires that all K-3 students who are performing below proficiency on district and state benchmarks in reading have an Individualized Literacy Plan. The plan is based on a child's reading performance on a variety of assessments which may include classroom assessments, district assessments, state assessments, report cards, text level measures, running records, or other indicators of reading achievement. The plans will vary greatly, depending on the needs of the child. The plan will reflect the best judgment of principals, teachers, and reading specialists — in consultation with parents — about what will be best for the child. This written plan must be reviewed and updated each semester and maintained until proficiency is reached. The plan requires a parent and student component, and the proficiency attainment should be mentioned in the form of goals and objectives. These specific students will receive intensive reading instruction, as described in their individualized literacy plan and designed to cause them to meet or exceed third grade reading proficiency.

### *Do Special Education students Need Individualized Literacy Plans When They Have Individualized Educational Plans (IEP)?*

The IEP is the official document and process for determining the educational program and characteristics of service for students staffed into Special Education. For children with disabilities that are a substantial cause for a child's inability to read and comprehend at grade level, prior laws will take precedence. The law requires parent involvement in developing the IEP and an annual review and evaluation of student's progress toward goals and objectives based on student need.

Given your district's resources, needs, and philosophy, you will decide whether you will incorporate the ILP into the IEP or maintain them as separate documents and processes. Hence, an IEP may need some restructuring to cover the necessary requirements to fulfill the ILP elements. As teachers build a student's IEP and/or ILP, there must be a teacher, parent, and student component.

- If you keep the documents separate, you will need to insure effective communication between all parties, provide a coordinated and consistent approach to literacy, eliminate redundancy of efforts, and coordinate record keeping and paper work.
- If you integrate both documents, you will need to coordinate key people, delegate responsibility for instruction, monitor and report student progress, conduct semester reviews, and maintain paperwork. The IEP goals and objectives should demonstrate proficiency attainment.

A complete Learning and/or Literacy Plan should be created for any subject area where the student is not performing at the Proficient level and the subject area is not being addressed at all in the IEP (or, if a student is K-3 and not progressing at a Proficient level in reading).

**Resources for Assessment Tools:**

Blevins, Wiley: *Phonics from A to Z: A Practical Guide*

Chall, Jeanne S. and Popp, Helen M.: *Teaching and Assessing Phonics: Why, What, When, How*

Ericson, Lita and Juliebo, Moira Fraser: *The Phonological Awareness Handbook for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers*

Robertson, Carolyn and Salter, Wanda: *The Phonological Awareness Test and Profile* (LinguiSystems)

Rosner, Jerome: *Phonological Awareness Skills Test and Program* (Pro-Ed) [originally the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills]

Torgesen, Joseph K. and Mathes, Patricia G. : *A Basic Guide to Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Phonological Awareness*

Wilde, Sandra: *Miscue Analysis Made Easy: Building on Student Strengths*

Yopp, Hollie, The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation described in the article "A Test of Assessing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children," The Reading Teacher, 49, (1995), PP. 20-29.

District supported Individual Reading Inventory: Flynt-Cooter, Qualitative Reading Inventory, Jerry Johns, DRA, etc.

# Mapping Literacy Learning: Deciding What and How to Teach Our Students

Laura Benson

As we come to know our students as individuals, we are determining their strengths and needs. These form our students' learning goals — along with our standards and curriculum — and give us a destination for learning. Here is a road map for learning profiling the journey we might take to help our student achieve their literacy goals.

### Knowing Students As Individuals and Determining Learning Needs

- How can I get to know each child as an individual learner?
- What does the child need to learn? What are his or her goals?
- How can I build in opportunities to connect with students as individuals each day and each week?

### Creating Ways for Children to Learn

- What will help this child/children learn _____?
- How can I use this child's strengths to help him or her acquire new strategies, skills, and habits as a reader?
- How can I model this for the child?
- How can I nudge this during our one-on-one conferences?
- What layers of learning and support will help this child? (*To, With, and By* support: Modeled → Shared → Guided → Independent)

### Matching Readers to Books

- What text will help the child gain strategies and foster comprehending?
- What texts will take this child to his or her next place in the literacy learning journey?
- Do my students have time and opportunities to read from their passions?
- Clustering/Grouping Children by Needs, Passions, and Social Regards
- Do I see kindred spirits for learning?
- What social structures will help this child/children learn? Small groups?

### Launching the Learning

- How I can launch and build learning from the child's/group's strengths to minister to his/their needs?

### Practice the Learning

- How can I give this child/group massive amounts of time and opportunity to practice this learning?
- How will I gradually withdraw my support and hand over the responsibility for the child's goal to the child?

**Strengthening and Deepening the Learning**

- What can I do/we do to deepen the child's use of this learning/goal?

**Monitoring the Learning**

- Is the child using/internalizing this learning? How's it going? Time to move on? What next?
- Now that I know the child well, what additional information do I need to inform my teaching?

### *Bibliography*


Allington, Richard, and S. Walmsley. (1995). *No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America's Elementary Schools*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Benson, Laura. (2000). Going On Rounds: Talking About Student Work. *Colorado Reading Council Journal* 11, 9 — 14.

Bridges, L. (1995). *Assessment: Continuous Learning*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Clay, M. (1993). *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Colorado Department of Education. (1997). *Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act*

Harvey, Stephanie, and Goudvis, Anne. (2000). *Strategies That Work*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Hill, B. (1998). *Classroom Based Assessment*. Christopher Gordon.

Johnston, P. (1997). *Knowing Literacy: Constructive Literacy Assessment*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Krashen, Stephen. (1993). *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

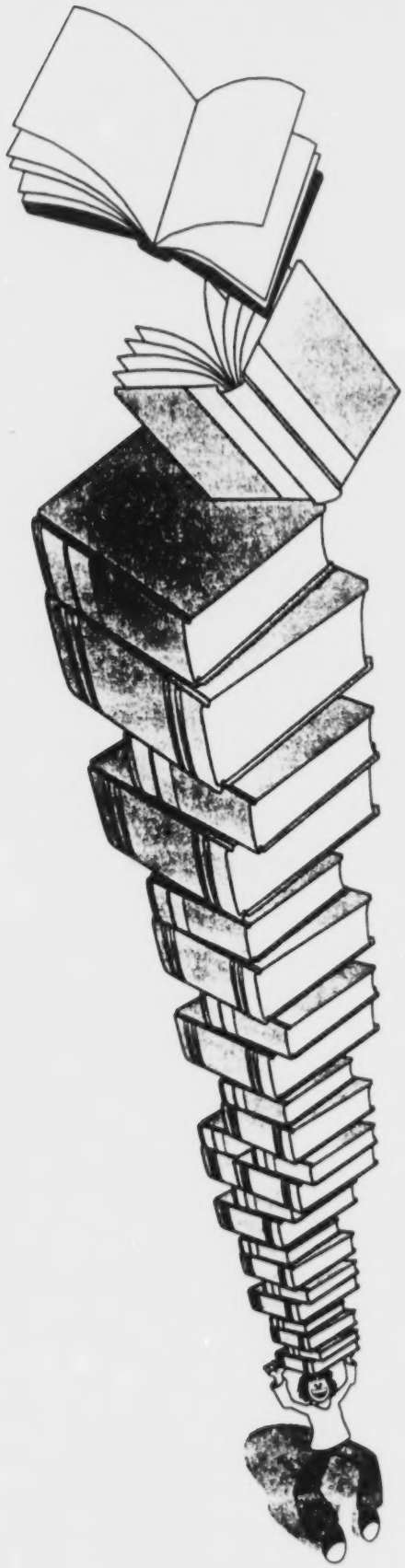
Quate, Stevi. (2000). *CSAP: A Dance In The Making*. The Colorado Communicator, Vol. 23, No. 3, 16 — 22. Lakewood, CO: CCIRA.

Rhodes, Lynn. (1993). *Literacy Assessment: A Handbook of Instruments*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rhodes, Lynn, and Shanklin, Nancy. (1993). *Windows Into Literacy: Assessing Learners K–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Taberski, Sharon. (2000). *On Solid Ground*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Wilcox, Carol. (2000). *The CSAP Effect: Some Reflections on Assessment and Curriculum*. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 4–8.



## Section II

# Responding to Children's Needs

## Teaching and Learning Strategies

# Fostering the Disposition To Understand

Laura Benson

*You learn to read so you can identify the reality in which you live,*
*so that you can become a protagonist of history rather than a spectator.*

*Barbara Kingsolver in* Animal Dreams

Understanding and putting our students in control of their own thinking is at the heart of our teaching as literacy educators. Every day, through every classroom interaction, we are cultivating thinking within our students. Our goal is to enable each child to be an independent, purposeful, and joyful reader and writer. And we nurture the disposition to understand with immense care and rigor.

When we were children, thinking and reading were mysterious and silent skills. As I girl, I was often baffled by reading and all that was stored in the cave of one's brain. I looked around my classroom and wondered how everyone else could read books so quickly, so accurately. You and I were told to read, but rarely, if ever, shown *how* to read. As we have come to understand the need for modeling as a critical tool in learning, we work to cultivate our students' literacy by revealing our ways of reading and comprehending and thinking to them and with them. We know that gaining thinking strategies empowers children to be protagonists of their own lives, thus giving them tools to battle misunderstanding, boredom, and apathy — to be victorious warriors of their own understanding and their own destiny.

## What is a Strategy?

In lay literature, I often find the word strategy associated with the word "destroy." As I studied this word, I discovered its military origins. In *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1970), strategy is defined as:

> Strategy: 1. a) the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, specif. (as distinguished from TACTICS) of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy b) a plan or action based on this. 2. a) skill in managing or planning, esp. by using stratagem b) a stratagem or artful means to some end.

At first I found this ironic that the word we, as teachers, so often connect with the construction of meaning could have its roots in destroying enemies. As I thought about the word strategy more, this association seemed kismet. What a strategy destroys is *not* understanding.

Dr. Dixie Spiegel of University of North Carolina (1997) describes strategy as "a procedure, a tool used to solve a problem." In *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing*, strategy is defined as "n. in education, a systematic plan, consciously adapted and monitored, to improve one's performance in learning."

Kathy Short, in *Bridges to Literacy* (1991), describes strategies this way: "Reading strategies are the mental activities that a learner initiates to construct meaning from text (Clay, 1985). Strategies are in the head problem-solving processes, which cannot be directly observed but about which inferences can be made by closely observing learners as they are reading...The reader's focus is on constructing message from meaningful texts rather than on practicing separate isolated skills."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A strategy is a plan of action. Strategies are the HOW of our reading — what we do to make sense and understand. In *Colorado Reads!*, and widely in our field, we refer to a reader's plans and ways of understanding as his comprehension strategies. As I have taught these strategies for the past twenty years and become more aware of my own strategies as a reader, I , like many of you, have can come to view comprehension strategies as thinking behaviors — how our brain makes sense of the world through viewing, listening, speaking, creating, writing, and reading.

I first came to know about strategies through my professor at the University of Denver, Jan Dole. She has studied comprehension for over 30 years and in the 1980s began publishing her findings with P. David Pearson. In 1991, Dole and Pearson along with Laura Roehler and Gerald Duffy defined strategies as the following (slightly adapted) *in Review of Educational Research*:

- Monitoring comprehension and repairing understanding
- Using background knowledge/schema
- Asking questions
- Determining importance
- Inferring
- Synthesizing
- Visualizing/sensing

Jan helped me see that strategies are our thinking behaviors. Reading occurs at the intersection of all our thinking strategies. As proficient readers, we use all of these thinking strategies, simultaneously, to sculpt, mold, and craft our version or interpretation of a story or text. The "ingredients" of our reading — our strategies — are interdependent and completely interwoven.

## What is Strategy Instruction?

Strategy instruction is an apprenticeship in which we invite our students into our world as reader and writer by naming, explaining, and modeling our ways of understanding. I am revealing what I do as reader to growing readers so that they know how to construct meaning on their own. I want my students to be able to birth and grow their own thinking with their own set of tools — their strategies. By taking reading from an in the head experience to something our students can witness and perhaps even cup in their hands, we give our children better opportunities to construct meaning and understand their world independently. As I work to help each student become more aware of his or her strategies, for each of us comes with them at birth, I remember Doris Lessing's words, "This is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way." Naming, explaining, and modeling our thinking as a reader, writer, and learner give our students a language to talk about their thinking. We all infer even before we learn to read. When we study inferring, our students will gain a name for this kind of thinking and have better insights into how to infer in all the texts of their lives by the ways we help them come to know themselves as readers and by the ways we mentor them from our own reading.

In teaching children these strategies, we often talk about one strategy at a time to make a strategy learning more concrete and tangible to the children. Following Pearson's advice of teaching with a Gradual Release of Responsibility (1983), we may spend a period of a few weeks to several months on one strategy. The following is offered to describe strategy instruction.

## Portrait of Strategy Instruction

To help a child or a group of children acquire thinking strategies...

*Launching a strategy study...*

- Start with modeling
- Start by revealing strategy via read-alouds/shared readings(cultivate the focus strategy via listening comprehension)
- Start with easy level text
- Start with short text
- Start with text which offer more supports than challenges to the read/readers
- Start with child's/group's most successful genre
- Connect text to child's/group's passions
- Create an anchor experience which describes or acts as metaphor for the strategy
- Demonstrate and discuss child/children's current use of strategy

*Move to...*

- Guided practice of strategy
- Using a variety of genres (expose children to as many as you can find!)

*Provide...*

- Massive amounts of time for reading = implementing strategy
- Constant feedback about use of strategy; name and create awareness of effective use of strategies and behaviors
- Lead child to deeper use of strategy by conferring, guided practice, and continue modeling, modeling, modeling your thinking

*Gradually...*

- Increase challenges of text
- Increase length of text
- Increase requirements for child's use of strategy as he or she reads independently

The next part of this section will detail each strategy and "sketch" a few ways to cultivate these strategies within our students including: focus lessons (for modeled reading/demonstration and shared reading); the "in the head" language readers use to understand (self talk and the prompts helpful for making children mindful of these language tools); ideas for practicing the strategies in authentic texts; and books helping in naming, modeling, and explaining each strategy and student practice of strategies.

# The Geography of Strategy Instruction: Aligning Reading Instruction

Laura Benson

To strengthen each and all of my students as readers, I focus my teaching efforts toward helping my student learn one thinking strategy over a period of three to eight weeks. Cultivating this thinking disposition, I teach our focus strategy via the following learning wells:

### Large Group Focus Lessons

I model, name, and explain the focus strategy or skill with my students in a large group gathering.

- *Modeling reading*
- *Shared reading*

### Conferring/One-on-One Practice and Instruction

As my students read text independently, I monitor, nudge, and/or reinforce each child's use, acquisition, understanding, and transfer of our focus strategy or skill to his or her reading process by conferring (talking one on one) with each student several times a week) and by having students record their thinking via written and artistic response. Children spend most of their literacy time here, in independent reading and writing.

- *Independent reading*

### Small Group Lessons

To offer support and further practice our focus strategy, I gather my students into small nest gatherings, guiding them in their reading of a text by engaging them in reading instructional texts (texts that are slightly ahead of where the child "is"), passion-based readings, or with considerations of practicing the focus strategies in different texts (to name just a few reasons for gathering in small groups. Children have the responsibility of reading the text on their own.

**With me**

- *Guided reading/reading nests/reading huddles*
- *Strategy groups*
- *Procedure groups*

**Additional support gatherings with or without me:**

- *Book clubs*
- *Literature circles*
- *Partner/buddy reading*

# Connecting Reading and Writing Learning

Laura Benson

*To people who ask me how to become a writer I say, "Read." It's the same advice I give to anyone who is interested in becoming a human being.*

Katherine Paterson

Reading strengthens children's ability to write. They bring their knowledge of words and the ways stories or nonfiction work from their reading to the blank page as they begin to craft their thoughts. And by wrestling with words and employing their knowledge of the sounds and patterns of our language as writer, their reading grows stronger from their writing.

As teachers, we see every day the potent connections between children's reading and writing processes and learning. Wanting to capitalize on the organic, interdependent nature of literacy, I work to make connections more explicit for my students by using the thinking strategies as the vehicle for all our reading and writing learning (and all content area learning). As we study using our background knowledge as readers, we study how authors use their background knowledge to write. While studying the power and necessity of inferring while we read, we study what inferring looks like in writing. This might be in poems, pronoun references, foreshadowing, or creating pieces that "show, don't tell" (to name a few).

The following pages are provided to give you a few windows into what integrated literacy instruction looks like. My intention in connecting constructing (reading) and composing (writing) strategies is to have each interaction with the written word cross fertilize a child's literacy thinking. Also, see Considerations for Kindergarten Readers, page 96, which can help teachers of every grade level make connections between reading and writing learning.

## Mapping the Content of Our Literacy Learning and Instruction

| When | Meaning Focus | Writing Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Beginning of Year | *Monitoring comprehension** | *Monitoring* |
| | Why Read? | *Composing* |
| | What can we read? | Why write? |
| | What is reading? | What can we write? |
| | • Integrating cueing systems (x✓) | What is writing? |
| | • Making sure monitoring behaviors are in place or emerging: | How/where do writers get their ideas? |
| | – does it make sense? | Making sure monitoring behaviors are in place or emerging |
| | – does it look right? | • Clarity/does it make sense? |
| | – does it sound right? | • Word strategies |
| | | • Topic selection |
| Fall | *Background knowledge* | *Ideas and voice* |
| | Using and building background knowledge/schema as readers | *Sentence fluency* |
| | Making connections as we read | *Background knowledge* |
| | | *Using and building background knowledge as writers* |
| | | *Voice* |
| | | *Ideas* |

| When | Meaning Focus | Writing Focus |
|---|---|---|
| Fall | *Asking questions* | *Writing from our questions*<br>*Word choice*<br>*Sentence fluency* |
| Fall | *Inferring* | *Show, don't tell*<br>Creating predictions<br>*Ideas*<br>*Organization* |
| Winter | *Determining importance* | *Conveying importance*<br>*Word choice*<br>*Conventions* |
| Winter/Spring | *Synthesis — retelling* | *Synthesis*<br>*Organization*<br>*Voice* |
| By mid-year | *Synthesis — summarize and synthesize from multiple sources* | *Voice* |
| Spring | *Visualizing/sensory imaging* | *Sensory images*<br>*Word choice*<br>Painting images/ideas with words<br>*Conventions* |
| All year | *Response — written, oral, artistic* | |

* Many districts throughout Colorado are using the Six Traits of Writing from the Northwest Regional Laboratory. These are shown in italics.

**I encourage you to develop a map for your students based on their strengths and needs.** The map outlined here reflects the sequence of comprehension learning and instruction which proved to be most helpful to most of my own classes of students (grades 1–5). Please note, there is no hierarchy or prescribed way to teach the strategies as articulated in the original research from Janice Dole and P. David Pearson. As always, you will use your judgment based on your knowledge of your students as individual thinkers to determine the path of strategy instruction most helpful to them.

My students' learning of these thinking strategies grows from:

- our large group **modeling and instruction**
- moving to **independent practice** by giving my students massive amounts of time to read and thus practice our focus strategy
- monitoring their use of the strategy by **conferring**, offering students more teaching or feedback during these one-on-one gatherings
- engaging in **small group gatherings** to further our strategy study

As you examine the data you have for your own students (including your observations, regular classroom work, student and parent surveys, continuums, and assessment data — your students' bodies of evidence), I encourage you to talk with your colleagues about how you all are crafting strategy learning for your community of students.

The following table shows some of the connections I make with my students to integrate reading and writing learning via thinking strategies.

## Constructing and Composing Strategies: Integrating Reading and Writing Strategy Instruction

| Reading | Writing |
|---|---|
| Using background knowledge | Personal narrative/memoir |
| Determining importance | Nonfiction, newspapers, letters |
| Visualizing | Painting pictures with words<br>Show, don't tell |
| Revision | Revision |
| Fix-up strategies | Ear as editor, seeking help from fellow writers |
| Repairing our reading | Rewriting |
| Drawing inferences | Show, don't tell<br>Poetry |
| Monitoring comprehension<br>*"Does this make sense?"* | Audience and clarity<br>*"Does this make sense?* |
| Background knowledge/schema:<br>Using what I know about the world/self as I read; using personal experiences to make connections as I read | Background knowledge/schema:<br>Writing from what I know about the world and self; using one's own knowledge to craft writing |
| Asking questions as we read | Don't leave your reader with too many questions OR leaving your reader with a few questions — mysteries |
| Synthesizing information as we read | Organizing our thinking as we write<br>Constructive outlining<br>Beginning, middle, and end<br>Newspaper |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Cultivating Independence in Growing Readers

Laura Benson

To help our students strengthen their independence as readers, as teachers we work to:

- Create clear expectations/norms together (i.e., read/write for the entire time; let your body show me you are working hard; cross out, don't erase; etc.)
- Focus on the strategy of Monitoring Understanding first; use this as a touchstone (especially helping children know what to do when they are stuck as readers and writers); model and practice our tools for monitoring including but not limited to new word strategies — focus on meaning
- Ownership and Book Matching (the why of reading)
- Model our reading often — show them what independence looks like, feels like, etc.
- Gather together in small groups several times a week
- Foster self-evaluation; have children set individual literacy goals several times during the year; examine their bodies of evidence together — encourage them to do this self-reflection on their own
- Confer, confer, confer
- Talk with the children "along the way" about how they feel and sense they are doing as independent readers/writers
- Children love independence and seek interdependence. They intuitively seem to know that some of their literacy industry needs to be with other readers and writers, and some of the time they will demonstrate their desire to do it themselves.

*All children possess the fundamental attributes they need to become literate.*

Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

## Effective Literacy Teachers

The Center on English Learning and Achievement recently reported findings from a team of researchers who observed first grade classrooms in 14 districts across 5 states. The team observed nine characteristics in the classrooms of effective literacy teachers:

- Students were engaged in academic activities 90% of the time.
- Teachers managed student behavior, student learning, and instructional aides and specialists using a variety of methods.
- The environment was positive, reinforcing, and cooperative.
- Word-level comprehension, spelling, and writing skills were taught in the context of actual reading and writing tasks.
- Teachers used outstanding literature.
- Teachers set aside long, uninterrupted times for reading and writing.
- Teachers set high but realistic expectations.
- Teachers encouraged self-regulation. Students chose appropriate strategies for tasks, checked their own writing for correct use of conventions, selected their own books, and monitored their own time and work habits.
- Teachers made explicit connections across the curriculum. Reading and writing were integrated and related to other subjects.

From *English Update*, Center on English Learning and Achievement, University at Albany

# Modeling Literacy By Drawing From Our Well

## Knowing What and How To Teach Our Growing Readers and Writers

Laura Benson

Knowing what to teach our students begins with listening — a constant listening to our students and to ourselves. Listening with our ears, eyes and hearts to our students gives us the compass of understanding each child's needs/growth goals. In self listening, we listen reflectively harvesting the hows and whys of our own reading. We listen seeking to understand how it is that we make sense of text paying attention to a process which has now, as adults, become so automatic for us. A responsive curriculum for the readers in our classrooms and homes is hidden only by our being unconscious to our own reading. Being wide awake to my own reading gives me substance and insights to share with my students. This is what I mean by "drawing from your own well."

I craft lessons for my students by drawing from my well of experiences and practices as a reader. Lessons are not chosen at random or for my convenience. As I identify the literacy strengths and needs of my students, I go to my well of reading practices striving to find an "reader-instruction match" — a strategy or tool I use which I can share with my students to respond to their needs and help them grow stronger as readers and writers. It's a bit of brain bridge building — giving them a window into the world of reading and helping them to see that meaning is always the target of reading.

Developing a lesson which makes a connection and illuminates thinking processes for my growing readers is not always easy. What I reveal to them about my own reading often helps them. But not always. Sometimes I miss the mark. But as I continue to share my reading process with my students, my words add to their layers of understanding about reading — layers built from:

- modeling for one another
- by being reflective, conscious and articulate about their own reading process
- by talking with fellow readers and interviewing mentor readers such as their parents to glean additional, unique tools of readership
- and by reading books like *Pink and Say, When Will I Read?, The Winter Room, Best Wishes, Reading to Matthew, From Pictures to Words, William Joyce's Notebook, Dear Mr. Henshaw, Amelia Writes Again, Better Than Life, Frederick, Jeremiah Learns To Read,* and *Yolanda's Genius,* which give them more windows about what it means to live a literate life (stained glass windows!).

The point is to take reading out of the closet — to do that which makes reading alive and visible for our students. And by engaging in learning which is richly authentic, practical, useful, and worth while, we ensure that our teaching will have power, heart, and integrity.

The mystery of reading is uncovered by sharing our reading with our students...reveal, disclose, demonstrate, tell, model, share, divulge, narrate, discuss, ponder, explain, unfold, clarify, inform, prove, show, exhibit, report, expose, state, display, express, unveil, relate, report...and engage and honor their spirit to...practice, stumble, try, succeed, fail, ponder, witness, engage, scrap their knees, teach us, implement, grow, do it differently, integrate, forge new ways, live on Tulsa time/their own time line, be frustrated, love it, struggle, triumph... with our TRUST and unconditional love.

**Lesson Planning Tool**: Think about something you read in the last 72 hours. Jot down your thoughts here. Sharing what we do as readers brings integrity and clarity to our literacy lessons. Start your lesson planning for reading by choosing something from your bedside table to share your ways of knowing and understanding with you students. Encourage your students to share their bedside table/independent reading and the ways in which they constructed meaning as readers.

***What I read →*** ***How I read this text →*** ***How I could share this with my students***

# Monitoring Understanding

Laura Benson

Whether reader or writer, one has to be in control, in the pilot's seat so to speak, in order to understand or to be understood. The devotion of all our efforts as literacy teachers is toward giving our students the potential to be independent, joyful, and purposeful readers.

First steps toward independence include the capacity of a reader to know when he or she is *and* is not understanding the messages of a text. Along the way of a reading, an understanding reader has the inner tools to deal with all the conditions a text might present — the smooth highways, detours, pot holes, bumpy roads, and the twists and turns. An understanding reader works with the intention of getting to an expected destination — understanding the author's words.

We call this disposition of thinking monitoring understanding — meaning our ways of continuously checking or auditing our understanding as we read (and write and talk in a conversation and watch a movie and ...). For our students, their self awareness of knowing when they understand and knowing when they don't understand are critical milestones and vital tools in their literacy tool box. Toward this goal, early in the school year, I am mindful of the following:

I work to help students become...

- Cluefull about being cluefull or clueless

And, yet some are...

- Clueless about being clueless (or cluefull)

Hardest of all, a few of students...

- Couldn't care less about being cluefull or clueless

Students need to know that reading should make sense. And then they need to know ways to make sense as they read. These ways of knowing are our reading strategies. As Laura Robb notes in *Reading Strategies That Work* (1996),

> "Skills describes a set of helpful tools that students practice in order to improve reading. A skill becomes a strategy when the learners can use it independently, when he or she can reflect on and understand how it works and then apply it to new reading material."

Revealing the complex and mysterious ways our brain constructs understanding is at the heart of strategy instruction. As we attempt to take our abstract, in-the-head practices as reader and place these in the hands of our students, we need a language to describe our ways of knowing. Adapted from the research of Dole, Pearson, Roehler, and Duffy (1991), the language or names I use to describe the thinking we do as readers, writers, and learners are *Monitoring Understanding (including Repairing Understanding); Using Background Knowledge/Schema; Asking Questions; Inferring; Determining Importance; Synthesizing;* and *Visualizing (or Sensing).*

Of course, what good are strategies if our students don't employ them by wanting to read? Student attainment of strategies is only part of the equation of creating truly literate souls. I heard Frank Smith say once, "A truly literate human being is one who not only can read but is one who chooses to read." Uppermost in my planning of literacy experiences is the thought, "Will this help my children want to read?" I do know that as my students become more successful at understanding what they read, their confidence grows their passion for the written word. This gives me the drive to continue putting strategies into their lives.

As I model my monitoring strategies — and my reasons for brining reading into my life, I emphasize the language I use in my head as I read with the intention of giving my students self talk to use as they read independently. I listen for this self talk as I confer with students. If I don't hear the self talk or I want to take this disposition to understand to deeper levels, I prompt for monitoring by using the following prompts.

**Self Talk for Monitoring Understanding**

*I understand.*
*I don't get it. Hmm, what should I do now?*
*I'd better reread that.*
*I will try that again. I know...*
*I learned...*
*This made me think about.../I was thinking...*

**Prompting Monitoring:**

Tell me what you are thinking.
Does that make sense?/What would make sense here?
Does that look right?/What would look right there?
Does that sound right?/What would sound right there?
Reading should make sense. Let's see if we can work together to understand this piece.
What are you thinking as you read this section/word/part?
Have a go./Try that again./Give that another try.
Reread that part.
Ask the author for a "Pardon me. What did you say" as I showed you during our Shared Reading.
Reread the text to hear the words again.
Check the picture.
What could you do to help yourself there?
Let's try one of our new word strategies there. Which one do you think would work there?
Share your movie/video of this story/piece.

**Focus Lessons and Practicing Monitoring:**
**A Few Ways To Help Students Understand As They Read**

***Monitoring Mentor***

Model, share, demonstrate, explain, describe ***how*** you read text! Use the books from your bedside table to model and name what you do as a reader. Tell your students explicitly what you ***do*** as a reader. Also, share your thinking with the books you read aloud to your students (periodically — sometimes a read-aloud is for the heart more than the head). Most of all, we are ensuring that our students understand that reading should make sense.

***Rereading***

Help your students understand that great readers — even their brilliant teachers — must reread periodically as they read to make sense.

***Background Knowledge Bridge***

After multiple modelings of my own ways of using my own background knowledge as I read, I tell my students, "Every time you read, get in the habit of thinking about what you already know about the (topic/main ideas/themes). What we already know is our background knowledge (BK) (or schema if you prefer). And, what we know is a bridge to the new information in a text (You may want to say more about this or chart out model "bridges" of understanding from familiar stories or beloved nonfiction). Pay attention to what you are bringing to the text. At the end of our readers' workshop/literacy block, we will talk about how our using our background knowledge helped us understand what we read today." As we progress in our study of



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

background knowledge, I ask the children to talk about how their background knowledge changed with their reading. Refining and adding to their knowledge base also requires modeling from us and from one another (share the teaching with your students whenever possible — their models are always more clear than mine).Variation: You can include, "Draw a picture of what you already know and next draw a picture of a bridge. As you discover new information you can draw your connections between what you know/knew to the new information born from your reading of _____/this piece." With young children, we actually create a bridge of learning with "new" on one side of our bridge and "what we know" on the other side of the bridge. (See more ideas in Using Background Knowledge, page 40)

### *Sticky Notes*

Put a sticky note on a page where you were aware of asking yourself, "Does this make sense?" — especially if the answer was, "NO!" I want to talk with you about your sticky notes when I confer with you/when I meet with you in our large/small group."

### *Highlighting*

"Highlight any place in the text where you were confused. When we come back together to talk about the text, we will start with our confusions."

### *Leaving Tracks of Thinking: Writing Notes in the Margins*

"As you read this poem/newspaper article, leave tracks of your thinking... little jottings of your thinking in the white space of the text. You can draw pictures or symbols of your thinking, too."

### *Coding the Text*

"Using the codes we established together, leave symbols of your thinking on the text as you read this piece today."

| | |
|---|---|
| **?** | Confusing part |
| **!** | Exciting Part |
| **BK** | Connection to my background knowledge |
| **Yes!** | I get it!/I understand! |
| **I** | Important idea/word |
| ☺ | Funny part/I like this part |
| **Hmm** | Not sure |
| ☹ | I don't get it/What? |

### *Advanced Organizers, Maps, Thinking Tools — Tracks of Thinking II*

As I model and share the kind of notes I take as I read, I encourage my students to do the same. Because there are many books they cannot write in and/or I want to nudge their thinking specifically, I periodically use advanced organizers and templates (see example in the Appendix). As children go off to engage in their independent reading I launch them by saying, "Leave tracks of your thinking on this tool. My notes will help you to know what to pay attention to/what is important here." Later during conferences and/or in our group gatherings, I will ask the children to share these tools — their thinking tracks — with me.

### *One-Sentence Summaries*

At the end of your literacy block or as your students file out for lunch, ask them for one of the following summaries:

- "In one sentence, tell what this piece is about."

- "In one sentence, tell me what you were thinking as you read _____."
- "In one sentence, tell me about the character(s) and the problems he or she faces in this story."
- "Tell me about two to three of the author's important ideas in one sentence."
- "In one sentence, jot down a few of your connections from reading ____."
- "Write down one of your questions from reading _____ and any answers you have found (so far)."

Periodically, you may want to ask your students to write their one sentence summaries (for kindergarten students, ask them to draw their summary if you like). This monitoring of the children's understanding will enable you to give the children feedback. This feedback can strengthen their self evaluation of their own reading.

***Talking Circles***

With my own students, I end each day of our Literacy Workshop by gathering together for a Talking Circle. Built from Native American traditions, the circle brings us together as a ritual to talk about what we are thinking and how we are feeling. A few years ago as I observed Manhattan New School teacher Sharon Taberski, author of *On Solid Ground*, I heard an important question which is now a part of my closing workshop talking circles. Every day, Sharon asks her students, "What did you learn about yourself today as a reader?" This gives children daily practice in self-evaluating their own literacy understanding and, by hearing other reader's thoughts, we are sharing the teaching of how we go about the business of making sense as we read.

*Variation: Two Cents Worth.* I give each student two pennies. Each time one of us talks, he or she puts one penny into a penny pot in the middle of our circle. After having spent both pennies, each of us knows that we have said our two cents worth and listen for another's contribution to our sharing circle.

*Variation: Scribe to the Side.* Sometimes I have someone in my group who processes everything verbally or a child who really needs to learn to take turns during conversations. With these students, I enlist their help asking them to be my Scribe on the Side. As our Scribe, the child takes notes about our sharing circle conversation and/or offers his or her insights about our conversation. Often, these notes give me valuable insights about this child and my group.

# Using Background Knowledge/Schema

Laura Benson

"Understanding is determined not only by the instructional event itself but also by what the student brings to the event."

Kucer, S. (1998) "Authenticity as the Basis for Instruction" in *Practicing What We Know*, by Connie Weaver

### *Defining Background Knowledge*

All of us bring our lives — our experiences and knowledge — to our reading and writing. The life our students bring to text will enhance or sometimes hinder their understanding. Giving children windows into the mind through our modeling of using background knowledge is critical. Numerous research studies over the last 40 years have revealed the importance of a using one's background knowledge.

In modeling my ways of understanding and my use of background knowledge (sometimes referred to as schema or prior knowledge), I share the following with my students over the period of three to eight weeks:

As I read, I make connections between the text and...

- Personal experiences and myself.

  These are my *Self Connections*.

- My knowledge of and about the big, wide world.

  These are my *World Connections*.

- Other texts I have read (or which have been read to me)

  Novels, articles, essays, poems, student-written pieces, textbooks, graphics, charts, etc.

  Art and Photographs -Videos/films

  These are my *Cousin Text Connections*, (a term coined by former Douglas County colleague, Colleen Buddy, and her first-grade students).

- Classroom discussions, experiments and experiences (including other content areas)

  These are my *Classroom Connections*.

### *Self Talk for Using Background Knowledge*

The language I want to model and cultivate in my students to help them be mindful readers using their background knowledge includes:

- This reminds me of....
- This is just like...
- A connection I made to this piece is...
- A cousin text for this book is...

### *Prompting Background Knowledge*

As I mentioned in the previously, I listen for the self talk of each strategy and prompt it if I don't hear talk which will lead the child to understanding — or if I want to strengthen a child's disposition to use a strategy. *My goal is to help each child be a mindful reader — aware of his or her own thinking as well as understanding the piece being read or written by the child.*

What did this story/book/piece remind you of? Why?

As you watched me do during the modeled reading today, I constantly think to myself, "This reminds me of..." Show we a place in the text where you did what we did in shared reading today — where you found a reminds me of connection.

We have been talking about making connections as we read. Tell me about the connections you are making as you read _____.

How is this book like ...the book we read yesterday? ...the video we saw? ...a book you read before?

### *A Few Ways to Learn and Teach Strategy*

- **Background Knowledge for Words and Language**

  Using Background Knowledge means using what we know about how books work and how our language works in addition to our knowledge of the content themes of a text, author, or genre. During each strategy study, and most especially during our study of Using Background Knowledge, share with children how each strategy gives them access to meaning at the word level and at the text level. The importance of showing our students our word work tools within each strategy is critical.

- **Activating vs. Building Background Knowledge**

  One key consideration as I work to help my students be more aware of their background knowledge is determining what background knowledge each child has to bring to text. While I want children to use what they already know to figure out what they don't know (new information in the text), sometimes I observe that the child does not have that specific background knowledge or may be tangled in the application of their own background knowledge. Each time I nudge a student to draw on existing background knowledge, I have to ask myself, "Who needs my help right now in building their background knowledge?" and "How can I be of the most help in building this knowledge base?" Another consideration is "Are there ways I can bring other students into the teaching here? What mentors do I have for this knowledge within my group?" Sharing the teaching with students is a great way to strengthen a class's understanding and sense of community, and it will help you to have a rich, meaningful life outside of school, too.

- **Reading to Students**

  Reading to our students "marinates them in language" (Fletcher) and puts the language of books into their ears. Read from a wide well of genres to expose and thus increase your students' background knowledge.

- **Modeling How We Use Background Knowledge**

  The following is a transcript of a focus lesson in which I modeled my use of background knowledge as I read a novel.

  - **Background Knowledge Demonstration/Shared Reading**

  As I shared extracted passages from *Animal Dreams* by Barbara Kingsolver with my students, I highlighted places that caused me to think of my own life, experiences, and knowledge —

those place which forced my use of my background knowledge to understand the meaning of Kingsolver's words and images. I looked down at the text to indicate my reading of *Animal Dreams* and I looked up to share my thoughts aloud, inviting my students into my thinking. I read purposefully, but authentically and naturally, using words and phrases such as, "This reminds me of ...."; "This was just like the time my Dad and I ..."; "I remember..."; or "This book is like..." Translating our thinking into a common language gives all readers a community of words so that we can talk about the thinking we do in more tangible ways. Young readers need to understand that proficient readers use their lives, their experiences, and perceptions about the world to find meaning in what they read. The idea of composing a text while we read is a participation sport, one can't just be a spectator to his or her reading — or else you will out in left field without a catcher's mitt!

Here are the passages I shared with my students:

*"Halimeda's bed is still made. In the morning she'll rumple it so he'll believe she slept by herself, and then the girls will make it again. Their labors at deceiving him are as careful as surgery."* (page 3)

> **My B.K. Connection**: "This part reminded me of sleeping with my brother. Often when I was scared, I would crawl into bed with my brother — and tell him he needed to cut his toenails!"

*She said, "you can't let your heart go bad like that, like sour milk. There's always the chance you'll want to use it later."* (page 223)

> **My B.K. Connection**: This part reminded me of the need for being loving. Sometimes when someone hurts us we want to hate them in our hearts. This part of Kingsolver's story reminded me of working hard to be forgiving — and hoping that I am always forgiven. My feelings are a big way I connect with books. Let's talk about a book/piece you read which reminded you of some big feelings.

I read a quote she'd written me that seemed important, a statement by Father Fernando Cardenal, who was in charge of the literacy crusade: "You learn to read so you can identify the reality in which you live, so that you can become a protagonist of history rather than a spectator." I waited a minute, while a peacock screamed. Then I read some words of Hallie's: "The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most..."

> **My B.K. Connection:** "Wow, this is one of my all time favorite quotes. Do you know what being a spectator mean?" (Children and I talk about this concept/word). "I like that idea. Ms. Kingsolver's words remind me of what I believe about reading — we have to be involved and connect with the text. That's why I model my thinking with you and why I ask you to share your thinking with me and one another. Getting involved is so important in reading. Plus, you know what? Books grow my heart. They teach me about people like me and they teach me about people not like me. Has anyone read a book which made you think of your self — you know, a book or poem (or newspaper story) where you felt like the author really knew you? (Children and I talk about their connections). How about books which helped you learn about people unlike ourselves? Let's look around the room and go on a scavenger hunt for books in our classroom which help/helped us learn about other people. The children and I started a chart of books which became Mirrors and Windows- Mirrors for books which reflected our lives and Windows which helped us learn about other people.

*"And the most you can do is live inside that hope. What I want is so simple I almost can't say it: elementary kindness. Enough to eat, enough to go around. The possibility that children might one day grow up to be neither destroyers nor the destroyed."* (page 326)

**My B.K. Connection**: "This reminded me of our classroom rules and our talks about the importance of being kind to one another. Does this part reminded you of anything?"

***Books to Model and Practice Using Background Knowledge:***

- *Amber On The Mountain* by Tony Johnson
- *Drawing Lessons from a Bear* by David McPhail
- *Ira Sleep Over* by Bernard Waber
- *Jessica* by Kevin Henkes, Kevin
- *Children From Room 402* by Betty Paraskevas
- *Little Dog Poems* by Kristin O'Conell George
- *Memory String, The*, by Eve Bunting
- *My Life As A Dog* by Gary Paulsen
- *Oh Tucker* by Steven Kroll
- *Oliver Button Is A Sissy* by Tomie dePaola
- *Puddles* by Jonathan London
- *Reading Grows* by Ellen Senisi
- *School Mouse, The* by Dick King-Smith
- *Skinny Bones* by Barbara Parker
- *Some Frog* by Eve Bunting
- *Tom* by Tomie dePaola
- *Tomas and The Library Lady* by Pat Mora
- *Twenty-Six Fairmont Avenue* by Tomie dePaola
- *When The Relatives Came by* Cynthia Rylant
- Read books by authors who write from their background knowledge: Sandra Cisneros, Donald Crews, Tomie DePaola, Katherine Paterson, Cynthia Rylant, Gary Soto, Jane Yolen
- Text that reflects authors use of their own background knowledge: (autobiography, biography, personal narrative, memoir, scrapbooks)
- Books in a series are an excellent way to encourage children to use their background knowledge. The recurring characters and themes of books in a series give growing readers great success in being more aware of using their background knowledge and, thus, comprehending these stories.
- Read books with a variation on a theme. Reading different versions of folk tales and fairy tales is a motivating way to involve children in shared and independent readings (i.e., Compare Jon Scieszka's *The True Story of The 3 Little Pigs* with *The Three Javelinas or Goldilocks and The Three Bears* with *Somebody and the Three Blairs*).

# Asking Questions

Laura Benson

## Defining Asking Questions

The miracle of birthing thought as we read still awes me. Living all my adult life with people, little and big, who are taking their first steps as readers, I still marvel at the brain's hunger and capacity to understand. How did we learn to take the ink from a white page and transform it into stories of lakes and dragons, mothers cradling dewy babies, or the slaughter at the Sand Creek Massacre? What happens in our minds when we breathe in the words of another human soul?

Some words reveal their spirit with such clarity. It is poetic that the first part of the word question is quest. Questions send us on a journey. Seeking answers and learning to embrace the questions give us a trusty compass as readers. A question born in the reading of a book is a boarding pass to further exploration of the story and characters.

Asking questions as we read makes understanding possible and probable. Asking questions as readers helps us keep true to the journey of "Does this make sense?" and "What is the meaning/message here?"

To help our students cultivate habits of self-questioning as they read, they need us to act as a question mentor. I try to model "generic" questions — questions which work in understanding any or most texts. Additionally, I share process questions with my students to reveal my metacognitive strategies and, thus, help them grow in monitoring their comprehension.

As our students grow as readers, the many shades of questions will and must be revealed, too. The books which speak to our soul give us lingering questions. Some never find their answer. These are often "big life" questions — questions which resonate with our own life struggles. Why are people cruel to one another? How do I handle the loss of the person I love the most? Who created the sky? What do you do when you encounter a bully? Why am I here/what is my purpose? What made him kill? Why do people hate? How do you know when you are in love with the "right" person?

*Questions and Answers. That's what education is.*
The Jungle Book

### *Self Talk of Asking Questions Strategy*

I wonder...

I wonder...and I found out...

I wonder...I found out...and/or I was surprised to find out...Why...

Turning the title into a question, I asked myself _____ as I read. Why...

I am curious about...

### *Prompts for Questioning*

What are you wondering?

Take me to your "I wonders..."

Tell me about your thinking here.

What are you curious about?

Tell me about the questions you created while you read _____

What questions did you answer as you read _____?

What did you learn as you read _____? How did your questions help you?

Do you have any unanswered questions? Oh, goody. Let's talk about those.

Did you create a question from the title? How did it help you understand this piece?

*Ways to Learn and Teach "Asking Questions"*

- **Model "I wonder..." questioning with a variety of texts**

  Additionally, share how you create your "I found out..." answers as you read. Practice this together with your students (see following book lists).

- **Questions as a Compass**

  I share how questions steer my thinking. Like a compass, my questions guide my thinking to understanding. Giving each child a compass (real or paper) is a gentle way to help children be mindful of their questions. As the children read text independently, I ask them to flag their questions with sticky notes. We talk about their questions during our talking/sharing circles, guided reading groups, and during conferences. As we go deeper into our study of questioning, the students and I discuss "north star" questions — questions which get at the most important ideas of the piece/text.

- **Teacher as Question Coach**

  Guidelines and ponderings as we birth questions for and with our students:

  Ask questions I don't know the answer to. Why? Because these questions keep talk pulsating with the desire to understand the text and the reader; build critical thinking (i.e., inferring and synthesizing); ensure authentic book talk; and foster curiosity.

  Ask questions that help a child read not only this text but all texts — or, at least, all texts in this genre.

  Ask process questions (how the child came to that thought or question) as these cultivate habits of metacognition/monitoring and often flesh out content of text, too.

- **Student as Question Coach**

  Encourage students to share their questions, with the group acting as a mentor. Student-crafted questions can lead/guide the book talk and steer their peers' reading by giving them a road map for their reading; set a purpose for reading; model the power of predictions; illuminate the themes, messages or concepts of the book/text; validate the wisdom of the reader; and cultivate the possible in each reader. It's critical that children get in the habit of reading to answer their own self-generated questions. This breeds engagement, understanding, and helps them see reading as a well to draw from throughout their lives. (See the research of Taffy Raphael and Jo Worthy on the CIERA Web site [www.ciera.org/ciera] about the importance of student-generated questions.)

- **Question Collection**

  As my students and I create questions — on our own and together — we share our juiciest, most helpful questions with one another. In one part of our room, we save and cherish the rich questions that grow from our community of readers (at school and at home) in a book — or on a bulletin board and sometimes in a treasure chest.

## Books for Strategy Study of Questioning

| | |
|---|---|
| Douglas Florian | *Auto Mechanic, An* |
| Kate DiCamillo | *Because of Winn-Dixie* |
| Brian Selznick | *Boy of a Thousand Faces, The* |
| Barbara Abercrombie | *Charlie Anderson* |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| | |
|---|---|
| Patricia Polacco | *Chicken Sunday* |
| Steve Parker | *Crazy World of What If, The* |
| Karen Dolby | *Dragon in the Cupboard* |
| Eve Bunting | *Fly Away Home* |
| Bev Doolittle, Elise Maclay | *Forest Has Eyes, The* |
| Roddy Doyle | *Giggler Treatment, The* |
| Mem Fox | *Guess What?* |
| Helen Lester | *Hooray for Wodney Wat* |
| Ric Sanvoisin | *Ink Drinker, The* |
| Tana Hoban | *I Wonder* |
| Jo Ellen Bogart | *Jeremiah Learns To Read* |
| Karla Kuskin | *Jerusalem Shining* |
| Miriam Moss | *Jigsaw* |
| Suzanne Williams | *Library Lil* |
| Chris Conover | *The Lion's Share* |
| Mary Pope Osborn | *Magic Treehouse* Series |
| Nikki Grimes | *Meet Danitra Brown* |
| Jeannette Winter | *My Name is Georgia* |
| Stephen Krensky | *My Teacher's Secret Life* |
| Gail Gibbons | *Post Office Book* |
| Bert Kitchen | *Someday Today* |
| Lee Bennett Hopkins | *Spectacular Science* |
| Tony Ross | *Super Dooper Jezebel* |
| Jama Kim Rattigan | *Truman's Aunt Farm* |
| Eleonore Schmid | *Water's Journey, The* |
| Miriam Cohen | *When Will I Read?* |
| Becky Bloom | *Wolf* |

**Also:**

- Wordless picture books such as *Carl's Christmas* by Alexander Day and *Pancakes* by Tomie dePaola
- Books in Spanish such as *¿Que hay Para Comer?* by Shelley Harwayne are published by Mondo Press. A bibliography of children's books in Spanish can be found in Connie *Weaver's Practicing What We Know*, p. 436 — 438.
- Mysteries and fantasy books always work well for cultivating questioning.
- Nonfiction texts are born from questions. Authors often write to answer their own questions. Thus, these texts work well to help children become more conscious of the importance of questioning as readers and writers.

# Inferring: Seeing the Picture Before We Have All the Puzzle Pieces

Laura Benson

## Defining Inferring

As we read text of any genre, we must negotiate the meaning of the words. Sometimes the meanings are veiled with smoke or clouds. At other times, the words give us only part of the meaning, like having 16 pieces of a 20-piece puzzle.

The "doing," active nature of reading declares it to be more than it would appear to the observer. In other words, unlike many things in life, just watching someone read tells us nothing about what goes on in the head of the reader. These mysteries must be disclosed in spoken words. What we must reveal to our students is the "how" of these implicit patches, these inferences, in text.

Thus, inferences find their metaphor in the very act of reading — not to be understood until we become active, engaged "archaeologists" able to uncover the buried treasure of the author's words and messages. These numerous "digs" are the places within a text where we have to figure out what the author means, because they will not tell us everything. We are expected to discover some of the information or messages of the text on our own. Our inferring may be a pronoun reference of "he" for the character of Mr. Hamp in *Welcome Comfort* or the meaning of Langston Hughes' poem "My People." Another time, our inferring will make it necessary for us to predict what will happen next by what we know about the character's problem in a novel or, in nonfiction, what information is most likely to come next in a computer manual or science textbook from the chapter title.

Goodman (1993) describes inferring this way, "Inferences are possible and necessary because no text is a complete representation of the meaning." And Watson (1997) paints inferring as "...the information readers supply. Proficient readers go beyond the author's explicit information; they make use of implicit information. They do this by tapping into the vast store of knowledge gained from their lives which includes experiences with literature."

As we engage in a literacy apprenticeship with our student, sharing our ways of inferring is critical. This is often the place where our most struggling students falter. And their stumbles sometimes make them want to push the written word from their life. Show them first where and how they already infer. This takes the mystery out of how one infers. In other words, I show my students how they are already successful at inferring out of print (watching movies, listening to music, and "reading" someone's body language and facial expressions) and take it to print gradually. More ideas and the inferring self talk I try to cultivate in each student follow.

## Self Talk for Inferring

Modeling my inferring, I reveal the language in my head as I read — and infer:
*I bet...*
*I knew it...*
*I was surprised to learn...I bet... [and I knew it...]*
*I bet...I knew it...and/or I was surprised to learn...*
*I am guessing that...*
*I sense...*
*I predict...*
*I think...*
*Filling in the blanks here, I think the author means...*

### *Prompting Inferences*

To cultivate children's inferring, I prompt their self talk by prompting them with the following words as I confer with each child and meet with them in large and small group nests:

*Tell me about your "I bets..." and "I knew its...*

*"Tell me about your "I bet..." here. Where did this become an "I knew it." or an "I was surprised to learn.*

*"What will happen next? or What will you learn next?*

*What do you think this will be about? How do you know that?*

*Was there a part where you had to infer? Tell me about that. Like listening to me talk on the telephone, take me to a place in your reading where you had to figure out what the author was saying on your own?*

*Do you like the main character(s)? Why or why not?*

*Would the main character make a good friend? Why or why not?*

*The author won't tell us everything. They trust us to figure some things on our own. Take me to a place in your reading where you had to figure our what was happening on your own.*

*What can you predict from this chapter title/heading?*

### *Ways to Learn and Teach Inferring*

As we launch into our study of inferring, I use the following as focus lessons:

- **Modeling, Modeling, Modeling/Think Aloud**

  I share how I infer as I read, demonstrating my inferential thinking via a multitude of genres.

- **Telephone Game**

  I ask my students to listen to me talk on the telephone and infer who I am talking to and what we are talking about. I might be calling 911, ordering pizza or Chinese food, or talking to my mom. I am careful to leave out some important words during these conversations to demonstrate to the children how much they can and already do infer. It's critical that we show our students how they already use each strategy. Often, out of text use is a good place to start helping children be mindful of understanding — to know they are great thinkers out of print and slowly take their strategy use to print.

- **Body Language "Reading"**

  Another place children are successful with inferring is reading our body language. I make faces and say nothing, asking the children to infer how I am feeling. They love this one!

- **Music**

  Listening to instrumental music is a wonderful way to help children learn about and grow comfortable with inferring. As I play different music, the children and I discuss the feelings and moods of the piece.

- **Art**

  As we do with music, the children and I examine different pieces of art, inferring the feelings, purposes, or reasons of the artist.

- **Poems**
  Poetry always makes us infer. Thus, poems provide us with vivid opportunities to demonstrate and practice inferring. Modeling our understanding of a poem with one another creates deeper understanding of how and why we infer as readers and writers.

- **I Bet... I Knew it...**

  As I read to and with my students, we infer our way through a story or nonfiction piece by saying "I bet..." and "I knew it..." Later, I add "I bet..." and "I was surprised to learn..." because not all of our predictions come true or are confirmed as we read. We find some surprises and children need to know that this, too, is part of a good reader's journey.

- **Cloze Passages**

  On the chart, we practice inferring by taking a beloved story and thinking our way through and asking "What would make sense here?"

- **Pronoun References**

  As we read, pronouns are places where we have to infer to know who the author is talking about.

- **Wordless Picture Books**

  A genre which makes every reader a successful "inferrer," wordless picture books demand that the reader creates the words of the text.

- **Humor**

  A great deal of humor — jokes, puns, riddles, and movies — is funny because of inferences. Draw on humor to help you help your students become more aware of inferring — and how to do it!

## Books to Help Students Cultivate Inferring

| | |
|---|---|
| Adoff, Arnold | *Love Letters* |
| Agee, Jon | *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau* |
| Allard, Harry | *Miss Nelson Is Missing* |
| Alexander, M | *You're a Genius, Blackboard Bear* |
| Asch, Frank | *Bear Shadow* |
| Avery, Charles | *Everybody Has Feelings/Todos Tenemos Sentimientos* |
| Babcock, Chris | *No Moon, No Milk* |
| Baker, Leslie | *The Third Story Cat* |
| Banotuk, Nick | *Griffin and Sabine; Sabine's Notebook* |
| Baylor, Byrd (1986) | *I'm In Charge of Celebrations* |
| Bellairs, John | *The Mummy, The Will, and The Crypt* |
| Bleguard, Lenore | *Anna Banana and Me* |
| Briggs, Raymond | *Jim and the Beanstalk* |
| Brighton, Catherine | *Five Secrets in a Box* |
| Brookfield, Karen | *Eyewitness* series |
| Bunting, Eve | All her titles work well |
| Calhoun, Mary | *Hot Air Henry* |
| Cohen, Miriam | *First Grade Takes A Test* |
| Cooney, Barbara | *Miss Rumphius* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Crews, Donald | *Big Mama's* |
| Crews, Donald | *Freight Train* |
| Dakos, Kalli | *If You're Not Here, Please Raise Your Hand* |
| Day, Alexandra | *Carl the Dog* series |
| DeBrunhoff, L | *Babar's Mystery* |
| DePaola, Tomie | *The Knight and the Dragon* |
| DePaola, Tomie | *Pancakes for Breakfast* |
| DePaola, Tomie | *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup* |
| DeRegiers, B S | *May I Bring A Friend?* |
| Dragonwagon, C | *Always, Always* |
| Dragonwagon, C | *Home Place* |
| Duke, Kate | *Aunt Isabel Tells A Good One* |
| Duke, Kate | *Guinea Pigs Far and Near* |
| Feelings, Tom | *Soul Looks Back In Wonder* |
| Fleischman, Paul | *Joyful Noise* |
| Fleming, Denise | *In a Small, Small Pond* |
| Fleming, Denise | *In the Tall, Tall Grass* |
| Fleming, Denise | *Lunch* |
| Foreman, Michael | *The Angel and the Wild Animal* |
| Fox, Mem | *Guess What?* |
| Fox, Mem | *Time for Bed* |
| Freeman, Don | *Corduroy* |
| George, K O | *The Great Frog Race* |
| Gibbons, Gail | All her titles |
| Giovanni, Nikki | *Spin A Soft Black Song* |
| Golenbock, Peter | *Teammates* |
| Graves, Don | *Baseball, Snakes, and Summersquash* |
| Green, Donna | *My Little Artist* |
| Grimes, Nikki | *It's Raining Laughter* |
| Gwynne, Fred | *Chocolate Moose for Dinner* |
| Gwynne, Fred | *The King Who Rained* |
| Gwynne, Fred | *A Little Pigeon Toad* |
| Hopkins, Lee B | *Good Books, Good Times* |
| Howe, James | *Celery Stalks at Midnight* |
| Howe, James | *A Night Without Stars* |
| Hughes, Langston | All his poems; *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* |
| James, Simon | *Dear Mr Blueberry* |
| Johnson, Dolores | *Your Dad Was Just Like You* |
| Keats, Ezra Jack | *The Snowy Day* |
| Lionni, Leo | *Broderick* |
| Lionni, Leo | *Swimmy* |
| Little, Jean | *Hey World! Here I Am!* |
| Lucado, Max | *You Are Special* |
| Macaulay, David | *Black and White* |
| Macaulay, David | *Motel of the Mysteries* |

| | |
|---|---|
| MacLachlan, P | *Sarah Plain and Tall* |
| MacLachlan, P | *What You Know First* |
| Maclay, Emily | *The Forest Has Eyes* |
| MacDonald, Amy | *Little Beaver and the Echo* |
| Marshall, James | *George and Martha* series |
| Meyer, Mercer | *A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog* |
| Moon, Pat | *Green Lines: Poems for The Green Age* |
| Parrish, Peggy | *Amelia Bedelia* series |
| Paulsen, Gary | *Hatchet* |
| Pfister, Marcus | *Rainbow Fish* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | *A Fine White Dust* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | *Every Living Thing* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | *The Relatives Came* |
| Sandford, Lyne | *Ten Second Rainshowers* |
| Saunders-Smith, Gail | All her titles |
| Schertle, Alice | *A Lucky Thing* |
| Schertle, Alice | *Keepers* |
| Sendak, Maurice | *In Grandpa's House* |
| Sharmat, M | *A Big Fat Enormous Lie* |
| Steptoe, John | *The Story of Jumping Mouse* |
| Soto, Gary | *A Summer Life* |
| Turner, Ann | *The Hedgehog for Breakfast* |
| Turner, Pat | *Katie's Trunk* |
| Van Allsburg, C | All titles |
| Viorst, Judith | *Alexander Who Used To Be Rich Last Tuesday* |
| Wood, Douglas | *Rabbit and the Moon* |
| Worth, Valerie | All the small poems and fourteen more |
| Yolen, Jane | *The Mary Celeste: An Unsolved Mystery From History* |
| Young, Ed. | *Seven Blind Mice* |

*Thoughtful reading is only rarely a matter of flashy insight.*
*More often it is a gradual, groping process.*

*Dennie Palmer Wolf, Harvard University*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Determining Importance

Laura Benson

## Defining Determining Importance

My freshman year in college gave me an unforgettable window into a reader's need for determining importance. I was studying for my first exam in political science. With great earnestness and zeal, I left the bustle of my dorm room and went up to the study carrels of the library with a new pink highlighter, ready to harvest and internalize all the important information of my first semester in political science. I spent a couple of hours reading and rereading the textbook and my notes.

About 1:30 a.m., I thought I'd pull together all the really essential ideas into a list on a the back of a bookmark so that I could study these over breakfast. As I looked over the textbook and my notes, everything was ablaze in bright pink. All the information was new or only semi-familiar to me. Having spent my high school years in England, I was still learning about the infrastructure of American government and politics. Thus, because all the information in the text was mostly new to me, it all seemed important.

I share this story to illustrate that even as a young adult I had only a fuzzy idea of how to determine what was important in the texts I read from what was supporting or "extra" information. I also did not know how to successfully make connections (between the lectures of the course and the course textbook, for example). No one had ever shown me how to find the big ideas in a piece. I remembered sensing that everyone else must have this part of reading figured out. I hoped just practicing reading more would help me get better at it. What I really needed was a reading mentor to show me ways of finding the important ideas in a myriad of texts.

Unfortunately, my experience is not unique. Over the years I have witnessed so many of my students struggling to determine the important ideas of a text. Some even have the impression that every word and, in some cases, every idea is important (much like my political science test experience). Even more astonishing to me, some of my students, when reading to learn (i.e., reading about the Revolutionary war or reading their auto shop manual), believe that all the information in the text has to be committed to memory. Realizing they can't do this, they give up. In studying and documenting how most of my emergent or struggling students determine importance, the following patterns have emerged:

- new information
- new or long words parts/places where they totally agree with the author
- places where they are confused

I compare this list to my own list of ways of how we determine importance (now that I know how to do this a little better). My list is over twelve pages now. Here are some highlights from my list describing how you and I determine importance as we read and how, ultimately with our mentoring, we want our students to find importance:

- creating a question from the title so that as we read we look for answers to that question
- asking ourselves "What is the most important information for me to pull from this piece?"
- in the first sentence or paragraph
- concluding remarks
- print clues [bold text, italics, size, etc.]

- visuals/graphics [charts, graphs, photographs, drawings, maps, white space, etc.]
- look for and find surprises as we read...the surprises represent learning
- repeated information
- discerning author's message
- identifying the theme of the piece
- using our background knowledge about the author...knowing their passions, messages, and/or style of writing
- synthesizing or summarizing the piece along the way or at the end of our reading..."Just the facts, Ma'am"
- being able to retell — emphasizing the main ideas from the piece
- connect what we already know about the subject with the new information in the piece
- talk to self about what we are learning...may find *Aha*/s or *Hmm*s as we read

Studying the learning and teaching of reading has strengthened my own reading and brought me to new vistas of thinking. I share this knowledge with my students in our large modeling/focus lesson gatherings, while I talk with them during a conference, when I meet with them in small clusters, during our sharing circles at the end of our Readers' Workshop, and encourage them to transfer what we are learning about determining importance to their "reading before bed" experiences. I talk with them about coming to text with purpose and consciousness, always striving to help them not only become stronger readers, but readers with a voice.

## Self Talk of Determining Importance

Here is some of the language I model and nurture in growing readers to help them become more successful at determining the important ideas in the texts they read.

*I learned...*
*I was surprised to learn/read...*
*The most important thing to remember is...*
*The most important ideas here are...*
*The message here is.. The author wants me to learn...*
*My reason for reading this piece is...*
*I was surprised by/I was surprised to read...*
*I learned...*
*The most important thing(s) to remember is/are...*
*The big ideas here are...*
*From the title, I know the main idea of this piece is _____ and I will read to find the details...*

## Prompting for Determining Importance

If I don't hear self-talk/language which I think is helping a student to determine importance from the reading, I model how I determine importance, enlist peers to model their thinking for this student, and nudge the student's thinking with the following:

*Tell me what you are thinking.*
*What are the big ideas here?*
*When I read, I expect to learn something. What did you learn from this book/piece?*
*What are the main ideas/messages/theme here/in this text?*

*Is this a factual piece or one based on the author's opinion? How do you know?*
*As I read, I find surprises. These are usually the places where I learned something new. Did you find any surprises here?*
*How did the graphs/picture/charts/maps/bold print help you understand this piece/text?*
*What does the author want us to learn from this piece?*
*We are studying how we determine importance as we read. Take me to a place in your reading where you figured out what is important in this text/story. How do you know that?*

## A Dozen Ways To Help Students Learn To Determine Importance As They Read

1. **Model...Show Children the How of Your Reading**

   Model how you determine importance as you read a piece aloud — explaining what you do specifically to know what to pay attention to and remember as you read. Share your thinking process of finding the "big ideas" out loud in ways which help your students see your thinking. Encourage them to apply what you model as they read in class and at home — today!

2. **Student As Teacher**

   Invite a child who demonstrates successful use of determining importance to model and explain how they find the main ideas or themes as they read (The children's words are always more clear, more vivid than mine).

   Following your modeling, have the children...

3. **Interview Readers**

   Interview other readers (at home, in class, or in the community) about how they find the important messages or ideas in the texts they read. Ask your subject some or all of these questions, "How do you find important ideas (or the main ideas) when you read?" "What helps you find important ideas when you read?" "How do you know when something is important as you read?" "What should readers pay attention to as they read?"

4. **Title As Compass**

   Turn the title of the piece into a question. Read the piece to answer that question. Variation: Titles as a Promise. The title usually gives the reader the main idea. Tell your students this "secret." The author keeps his or her promise by giving readers the big, important idea of the text in the title

5. **Spotlight On The Important Ideas**

   Highlight the main idea/ideas and circle the details. Or, highlight the main idea(s) in one color and highlight the supporting information in another color.

6. **Color My World**

   Record the important ideas on color paper or index card. Record "extra" or supporting information on a different color(s) paper or index card. OR, assign a particular color to a particular topic recording (i.e., Record all information about animal habitats on green paper and all information about animal life cycles on pink).

7. **Thinking Tools/Records**

   Use two-column notes and/or teacher generated thinking records to jot down your ideas about what is important in a text.

### 8. Generating Titles

Cover the title of a text. Read the text to the children asking them to notice key words (I ask older children to record these words). After reading, brainstorm possible titles for the text together recording and discussing which titles fit the piece best and why. I ask older children to jot down their ideas for titles first and, then, we discuss possible titles which reflect the big ideas or main ideas. Non-fiction texts work especially well for generating possible titles.

### 9. Skim

To get a sense of the gist of a piece, skim the piece first. Ask yourself, "What is this piece about? What seems important here?" Of course, you have model this first.

### 10. Scan

To train children's eyes to find important ideas in a piece, ask them to scan a piece requesting them to find specific information.

### 11. Leave Tracks of Your Thinking

Jot down your thoughts in the margins of the text. Be sure to include your questions and connections. *Encourage students to share these notes with you during conferences and with one another during guided reading groups and/or sharing circles. *Variation:* I give my students the following bookmark to record their thinking(especially helpful when they can't write in a book).

| Bookmark Bites | |
|---|---|
| I found a powerful passage as I read: | I found these surprises as I read: |
| This seemed powerful to me because: | From these surprises I learned: |

### 11. Exit Cards

As you leave class today, tell me:

- about the important ideas are in this piece
- two to three important words
- the author's purpose or intent in writing this piece
- about the main ideas of this text
- how you figured out the message(s) of this piece
- how the title helped you find the important ideas

Request just one of the above. I usually ask my students to answer these in one sentence.

## Books to Cultivate Determining Importance

| | |
|---|---|
| Aliki | *How A Book is Made* |
| Aliki | *The King's Day* |
| Angelou, Maya | *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* |
| Barrett, Judi | *A Snake Is Totally Tail* |
| Brown, Margaret Wise | *The Importance Book* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bunting, Eve | *Fly Away Home* |
| Bunting, Eve | *Someday A Tree* |
| Bunting, Eve | *The Wall* |
| Bunting, Eve | *Wednesday's Surprise* |
| Cole, Joanna | *Magic School Bus* Series |
| DePaola, Tomie | *Oliver Button Is A Sissy* |
| Ehlert, Lois | *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* |
| Elleman, Barbara | *Tomie dePaola: His Art and His Stories* |
| Fletcher, Ralph | *Writer's Notebook* |
| Fletcher, Ralph | *Fig Pudding* |
| Fox, Mem | *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* |
| Gibbons, Gail | *Monarch Butterflies* |
| Gibbons, Gail | *Trains* |
| Gibbons, Gail | *Up the Skyscraper* |
| Haley, Alex | *Malcolm X* |
| Hawes, Julie | *Fireflies In The Night* |
| Janeczko, Paul | *The Place My Words Are Looking For* |
| Johnson, Tony | *It's About Dogs* |
| Kitchen, Bert | *Somewhere Today* |
| Kovacs, Deborah | *Very First Things To Know About Bears* |
| Little, Jean | *Hey World, Here I Am!* |
| Livingston, Myra Cohn | *Up In The Air* |
| Lloyd, Pamela | *How Writers Write* |
| Lobel, Arnold | *Fables* |
| O'Brien, Patrick | *The Bookworm's Feast* |
| Parring | *Then and Now* |
| Sabuda, Robert | *Tutankhamen's Gift* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | *Missing May* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | *Waiting To Waltz* |
| Ueland, Brenda | *If You Want To Write* |
| Wood, Jenny | *The Animal Book* |

And the following: Biographies/Memoir; Brochures; Colorado Children (*Denver Post*); Cookbooks; Internet Text; Mini Page (Rocky Mountain News); Newspaper; Poems; React magazine (*Denver Post*); Reference Texts; *Time for Children*; *Scholastic News*; Textbooks; *Zillions*; and pieces the children have written!

# Synthesizing

Laura Benson

*You don't learn from your experience.*
*You learn from processing your experience.*

*John Dewey*

## Defining Synthesizing

As readers, we have to been sprinters at times and marathon runners at other times. When I read the newspaper, I am often a sprinter. When I read the latest pick of our book club, I am a marathon reader needing to hold the meaning over the duration of my reading. Keeping the characters straight in my head, refining my predictions, chiseling my conclusions about why, developing a map of the plot in my head — all require my ability to synthesis the author's words to understand the story (fiction) or message (non-fiction).

The synthesis tools I use with my students give me windows into their thinking. Additionally, the ways I go about modeling and teaching synthesis provides me with rich opportunities to harvest evidence of my students' thinking. This evidence comes in the form of response — vehicles which children choose to represent what how their brains synthesizes (makes sense) as they read on our own and we read together. I try to keep the ways I ask my students to go public with their thinking authentic while at the same time giving me access to their inner journey as they read. With my students, I often decide to use the Somebody...wanted...but...so... framework outlined in Cunningham and Allington's *Classrooms That Work*. After modeling my thinking of *The Chalk Box Kid* (for example) by jotting down my Somebody...wanted...,etc. responses on four different colored index cards, I ask the children to do the same individually. Sharing our response/synthesis cards, we talk and ask each other about the characters and about our questions. This grows into a discussion of what the author wants us to learn from his or her story. Together, we each then created a synthesis on a fifth (and smaller) index card. Reading the children' synthesis cards, I evaluate whether we are getting to deeper understandings trying to determine if the children are increasingly able to discover the message(s) of an author's words. Their responses demonstrate the power of encouraging children to go deeper and stay with a text (and their thinking) longer.

The rich book club talk of a small groups, and our talking/sharing circles, brings each of us to a deeper understanding of the text.

Strengthening a child's synthesis requires us to get social. Connecting with fellow reading and writers is crucial for revealing and extending students' use of synthesis as they read. Equally important is the children's feedback and mentorship from me. The intimate relationship I have with my students via conferring and our notes and letters back and forth to one another gives me insights into how I can best cultivate their disposition to "pull all the pieces together" as they read.

Although space and time limit what I can share, I have included a few portraits of strategy learning and teaching here. My best advice, again, is to think about how you synthesize as you read and share your ways of synthesizing with your students.

## Self Talk of Synthesis Strategy

*I know...*
*Okay, I'd better stop and ask myself if I understand/can pull all these pieces together...*
*The quilt of my reading is...*
*I learned...*

*Pulling all the pieces/words of this text together, I know...*
*Somebody...wanted...but...so*
*Like putting a puzzle together, the pieces of my reading are...*
*In the beginning of the story...and by the end...*
*From the beginning...middle...end..., I know...*
*First, he...then, she...*
*From [all parts of this book], I learned/know...*

## Prompting for Synthesis

*Tell me about the quilt of your thinking.*
*What have you/we learned so far?/What do we know now?*
*From what we have read so far, what have we learned about the character?*
*Putting all the parts/chapters together, what can you tell me about the problem of this story?*
*...big ideas in this nonfiction piece?*
*What is this story about?*
*Tell me about the beginning, middle and end of this story/text.*
*Tell me about the piece in one sentence [one sentence summary].*

## Ways to Learn, Teach, and Practice Synthesizing

- **Synthesis As Response**

Response connects people. Reader and author. Reader and reader. Reader and teacher. Reader and self. Each day, we work to help our students cultivate connections and involvement by encouraging them to become intentional readers. Fostering their dispositions to understand is paramount in our planning and teaching. Constantly model how we read texts, engage them in numerous independent and guided practice experiences to give them massive amounts of practice, and elicit their understanding by asking them to go public with their thinking — i.e., respond to their reading giving us a window into their ability to synthesize.

How can we strengthen our students' capacity to respond? Access to other readers (and writers) is critical. My most frequent response vehicles are conferring, small group nest/guided reading gatherings, and sharing circles. Talking with my students one-on-one and in small groups gives me numerous opportunities to model and refine a child's ability to respond to his or her reading. Many of my students need me to paint a portrait of possibilities for them in how they could share their thinking aloud, in writing, or artistically. And, of course, I want to offer my students a rich palette so I hand over the teaching and modeling of response to my students frequently. Here is a taste of the response menu my students and I engage in:

- **Talk/Oral Response**

Talk: Conferring; Peer Conferring; Guided Reading Groups; Sharing Circle; Book Clubs; Literature Circles; Talking Circles; Buddy Partnerships
One Sentence Summary
Book Club Conversations
Literature Circles
Presentations/Speeches
Reminds me of... connection I wonder... questions and answers Say It Like The Character (Opitz)

- **Written Response**

Letter writing
Book review

Book blurb
Reflection piece/writer's notebook
Double entry
Diary
Two minute fast fact/five minute fast fact (Cunningham and Allington)
One sentence summary or sentence strip summary (Graves, Benson)
Powerful passages
Reminds me of ...
Connection
I wonder... Questions and answers (found and created) bet... I knew it ...
Somebody... Wanted... But... So...
Self-evaluation (letter or checklist)
Cloze passages
1,2,3/beginning, middle, and end cards
Maps/webs
K, N, L charts/K, W, L charts
Advanced organizers
Pattern writing
Back and forth journals

- **Artistic Response**

Act it out (Cunningham and Allington)
Draw it out (Cunningham and Allington)
Sketch a scene (Benson)
Readers' theater (Stewig)
Puppet show
Maps and graphic organizers

- **Choice**

As I model and offer my students a varied menu of response options over time, eventually I encourage my students to choose a way to go public with their understanding. Just as I often have the freedom to choose how I will demonstrate my understanding, I want to give my students numerous opportunities to select the form of response which best fits their thinking for a particular piece. This helps strengthen their reader voice — knowing themselves as a reader. I give my children a "heads up" that I will want them to show me some of their reading thinking by telling them, "When you are finished reading today, give me a window into your thinking by recording your thinking in one of the ways we have practiced the last several weeks/months. Some of the models for our responses are all around our room. As you read, think about which form of response will fit your thinking and the book you are reading." Or, "I will need some of your thinking on paper today (or I could say out loud). Think about the best way to share your thinking with me (or us) as you read today." I also often elicit a few ideas for response from the children before they read, "Those of you who know you book pretty well now, how will you share your thinking with us during our sharing circle today?" Or, "Any ideas for how you could let me know that you have understood what you will be reading today?"

Nudging response about a particular comprehension strategy is another way I request students to prompt for response.

Sometimes I want to harvest my students' thinking in a written form so that I can collect pieces of their work over time. These pieces of thinking in the child's body of evidence contribute to the portrait I can paint of the student as reader.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In deciding how my students will go public with their understanding, I want to ensure that I engage my students in response which radiates integrity and purposefulness. As Shelley Harwayne advocates in Going Public (1999), "use authenticity as a filter to decide what is worth sharing with children." Thus, the responses I build into my students' lives are those which help them deepen understanding, those which help them to know more about themselves as readers, and those which can be found outside of school. As we encourage students to revisit their thinking and register their thoughts, we are cultivating dispositions of understanding which can further their ability to be increasingly independent and, hopefully, joyful about reading.

## Books to Develop Children's Sense of Synthesis

While any book/text makes for a good synthesis vehicle, the following make this strategy more tangible for growing readers and writers. There are so many "big wide world" models of synthesis. Draw on these to deepen your Synthesis Text Set. For example, a movie review is a synthesis. So are book reviews, telling someone about our trip to the Cayman Islands, yearbooks, the 10 o'clock news, Sports Night, obituaries, and baby albums.

This list includes books to read to children and books for them to read on their own from a well of multiple genres. Happy reading!

| | |
|---|---|
| Pam Munoz Ryan | *Amelia and Eleanor Take a Ride* |
| Marissa Moss | *Amelia's Notebook* |
| Michael Chesworth | *Archibald Frisby* |
| C.W. Anderson | *Blaze the Horse* |
| Ruth Kraus | *The Carrot Seed* |
| Janet Stevens, Susan S. Crummel | *Cook-A-Doodle-Doo!* |
| Tomie dePaola | *Cookie's Week* |
| Cynthia Lewis | *Dilly's Summer Camp Diary* |
| Marissa Moss | *Emma's Journal* |
| Lynn Gordon | *52 Great Children's Books* (card set) |
| Bill Martin Jr. | *"Fire! Fire!" Said Mrs. McGuire* |
| Gail Gibbons | *From Seed To Plant* |
| Nikki Grimes | *Jasmin's Notebook* |
| Raymond Briggs | *Jim and the Beanstalk* |
| Andrew Clements | *The Landry News* |
| G. Matthaei and J. Grutman | *The Legend of Thomas Blue Eagle* |
| Kristin O'Connell George | *Little Dog Poems* |
| Jules Feiffer | *Meanwhile...* |
| Barbara Cooney | *Miss Rumphius* |
| Libba Moore Gray | *My Mama Had A Dancing Heart* |
| Lawrence Pringle | *Naming the Car* |
| Robert Blake | *The Perfect Spot* |
| Avi | *Poppy and Rye* |
| Jeff Brumbeau | *The Quilt Maker's Gift* |
| David Macaulay | *Shortcut* |
| Lisa Campbell Ernst | *Stella Louella's Runaway Book* |
| Marissa Moss | *Rachel's Journal* |
| Samantha Abeel | *Reach for the Moon* |
| Pat Hutchins | *Rosie's Walk* |

| | |
|---|---|
| E. Trivizas | *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* |
| Andrew Clements | *Workshop* |
| D Guthrie, N Bentley, K Arnsteen | *The Young Author's Do-It-Yourself Book* |
| D. Guthrie and N. Bentley | *The Young Journalist's Book* |

...and, as always, **books the children have written!**

***Synthesis Out In The Big Wide World***

Autobiographies
Baby Albums
Biographies
Book Reviews
Christmas Letters
Diaries
Do-it-yourself Manuals/Guides
Itineraries
Journals
Letters
Many Magazines
Memoirs
Movie Reviews
Newspapers
Non-Fiction Books
Obituaries
Post Card Trip Summaries
Professional Books
Recaps
Research
Storytelling
Trip Photos
TV Guide
Updates
Year Books

# Visualizing and Sensing

Laura Benson

*Read good books because they will encourage*
*as well as direct your feelings.*

*Thomas Jefferson, 1787*

## Defining Visualizing and Sensing

"If we build it, they will come." I think of this quote from the beautiful movie, *A Field of Their Own*, as a metaphor for the power of visualizing and sensing as we read. As we read, the images and feelings we create in our heads help us to understand the meaning of an author's words. Taking words from their black ink and making them a Technicolor landscape in our minds is visualizing. Conceptualizing the feelings of a piece is sensing (which is a kindred spirit if not a twin to inferring).

To birth understanding, our brain wants and needs to conceptualize our thoughts — including the thoughts of another person we take into our brain through reading.

When I read *Like Water for Chocolate*, *Julia Child In The Kitchen*, and *A Year in Provence*, I was starving at the end of each chapter because the authors' words so vividly put me into the scenes of their books. I could see the food. In my head as I read these works, I created banquet tables of food — roasted turkey with flowers of fruit, flan with burnt sugar topping, and mysterious steaming soup which sent its diners into amore. I could almost touch this food sitting in large silver bowls and arranged on large ceramic platters with rose petals hugging each dish. I was there smelling the burning clove candles and the citrus and lavender perfume of the ladies at the table.

The pictures and feelings we construct in the reading of a text greatly impact our ability to take that information into long-term memory. And, if we are truly successful, we can use these pictures, images, and feelings to help us retrieve this information later. And isn't this a hallmark of learning?

So, if we *build* a movie in our heads as we read, understanding will *come*.

## Self Talk of Visualizing/Sensing

Here are a few ways I hope to help growing readers develop their disposition to visualize and sense their way through text:

*I can picture that in my mind...*
*I can feel...*
*I sense that...*
*When I read that, I see...*
*I see/saw...*
*While I read _____, I saw...*
*I feel.../I felt...*
*The movie in my head is...*
*The sounds, smells, and light of my reading are...*
*Painting a portrait of my reading, I saw...*

## Prompts

Take children back to your modeling:

*Tell me about your thinking.*
*What did you see as you read _____?*
*Describe the video of your reading.*
*Draw a picture of your thinking.*
*What did you feel as you read this piece?*
*Tell me about the movie of your reading.*
*What color describes the feelings of this piece? Why?*
*What color captures your thinking(for this piece/text)?*
*When I read Maya Angelou, I love how her words wash over me. Take me to a place where the words felt like a warm bath.*
*Show me a place where you could really see this story...feel like the character.*
*Tell me about powerful passages you found as you read this. Show me...*
*How did the author show and not (just) tell?*
*What music would you put with this piece?*
*Who would you cast in the roles of the main characters? Why?*

## Ways to Learn and Teach Strategy

- **Model your ways of visualizing**

  Starting with a book from your bedside table, talk to your students about the images, pictures, feelings you created in the reading of this book. Your images do not have to include every detail of, say, a character's face. I read once that the author of Forrest Gump did not see Forrest's face until Tom Hanks was cast in the role of Forrest (and this was, of course, after the book had been written). Just be honest and authentic about your visual thoughts from your own reading. Your words will light your students' paths to become better reading artists.

- **Reading Artist**

  Read a picture book to your students but *do not* show them the pictures. Ask them to sketch what they see in their minds as you read the words of the story. *The Aminal* by Lorna Balian is an excellent story to start sketching. I also read aloud the works of authors such as Natalie Babbitt, J.K. Rowling, Tom Barron, Lloyd Alexander, Patricia MacLachlan, Katherine Paterson, and Jane Yolen (perhaps one of their scenic novels) and ask students to draw their thinking.

- **Lights, Camera, Action**

  Put children together in improv or "act it out" groups to dramatize a scene from their reading — or even some of their nonfiction reading too. Encourage the children to do this quickly with few props so that your class can do this often. My children and I did this with a ton of poems each year. *Added benefit:* If the children are sharing a poem as a quick play, they are rereading the poem dozens of times, which not only improves their understanding of the poem but also strengthens their fluency.

- **Director**

  Ask the children to cast their movie of a reading. Ask them, "Who would play the lead actor/actress and why?" As they become more skilled at being the director of their own book-movie, ask them how they would stage scenes, how characters should say lines (or a specific line if time is short), etc.

- **Film footage**

  Bleach camera film or old film strip reels. Give each child a strip on which to draw a "piece" of the story or a "piece" of the thinking that took place during reading.

- **Body of Evidence artifacts**
  Children's artistic responses to their reading are excellent additions to their bodies of evidence. Capture and harvest some artistic artifacts throughout the year to add to their collections of work/bodies of evidence.

- **Fiction Workshop**

  Taking turns, my students and I build a story together orally. As I call out basic story parts such as "Character. Who is our character?" and "What should the character's problem be?" the children offer their suggestions. You can do this as a large group or encourage the children to discuss and build their story in teams. A great way to practice visualizing when you have those awkward 5.3 minutes before lunch or the end of school, too (or the dreaded indoor recess days). My children have always loved this.

- **Draw Your Thinking**

  I give children one to four sticky notes and have them sketch their thinking for the piece they are reading every few pages (or paragraphs if the text is an information-dense piece of nonfiction). This is a great way to introduce interpretation, too.

## Books for Modeling and Practicing Visualizing/Sensing

| | |
|---|---|
| Babbitt, Natalie | Anything! |
| Balian, Lorna | *Aminal* |
| Barrett | *Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing* |
| Baillet, Yolande | *Matisse: Painter of Essential* |
| Baillet, Yolande | *The Impressionists* |
| Baum, Frank | *The Magic of OZ* |
| Blizzard, Gladys | *Come Look With Me: Enjoying Art with Children* |
| Blizzard, Gladys | *Come Look With Me: World of Play* |
| Bunchman, Janis | *Picture and Poetry* |
| Collins, Pat Lowery | *I Am An Artist* |
| Cummings, Pat | *Talking with Artists (Vol. 1 and 2)* |
| Dubelaar, Thea | *Looking for Vincent* |
| Fair, Sylvia | *The Bedspread* |
| Fletcher, Ralph | *Twilight Comes Twice* |
| Gibbons, Gail | *Paper, Paper Everywhere* |
| Goffstein, M.B. | *Lives of the Artists* |
| Green, Donna | *My Little Artist* |
| Koch, Kenneth | *Talking to the Sun* |
| Lindbergh, Reeve | *North Country Spring* |
| Livingston, Myra Cohn | *Up In The Air* |
| Loumaye, Jacqueline | *Van Gogh: The Touch of Yellow* |
| McKinnon, Judith | *Look What I Made!* |
| McPhail, David | *Drawing Lesson from a Bear* |
| Paterson, Katherine | Anything! |
| Paulsen, Gary | *The Winter Room* |
| Rylant, Cynthia | Anything! |
| Sabuda, Robert | *Tutankhamen's Gift* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Simon, Seymour | *Now You See It, Now You Don't* |
| Stevens, Janet | *Cook-A-Doodle-Doo!* |
| Suess, Dr. | *Bartholomew and the Oobeleck* |
| Willis, Val | *The Secret in the Matchbox* |
| Yolen, Jane | Anything! |

And, as always, pieces written and illustrated by the children!

**From our reading...**

| | |
|---|---|
| Alvarez, Julia | *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* |
| Berg, Elizabeth | *Open House* |
| Cisneros, Sandra | *The House on Mango Street* |
| Conroy, Patrick | *Prince of Tides; Beach Music* |
| Esquivel, Laura | *Like Water for Chocolate* |
| Goldberg, Myla | *Bee Season* |
| Kingsolver, Barbara | Anything! |
| Lindbergh, Anne Morrow | *Gifts from the Sea* |
| Mayle, Peter | *A Year in Provence* |
| Smiley, Jane | *A Thousand Acres* |
| Tyler, Anne | *Accidental Tourist* |
| Tom Wolfe | *A Man In Full* |

| **Reader's Talk** | **Reader's Talk** |
|---|---|
| Tell me about your thinking<br>*OR*<br>What are you thinking?<br>This reminds me of...<br>I wonder...<br>I bet...<br>I learned,.... | Tell me about your thinking<br>*OR*<br>What are you thinking?<br>This reminds me of...<br>I wonder...<br>I bet...<br>I learned,..... |
| **Readers...** | **Readers...** |
| Work to understand<br>• *I get it*<br>• *This is about* | Work to understand<br>• *I get it*<br>• *This is about* |
| Make connections<br>• *This reminds me of...* | Make connections<br>• *This reminds me of...* |
| Make predictions<br>• *I bet...* | Make predictions<br>• *I bet...* |
| Find the big ideas<br>• *The most important idea/ideas here is/are...*<br>• *The author wants me to learn...* | Find the big ideas<br>• *The most important idea/ideas here is/are...*<br>• The author wants me to learn... |
| Put all the ideas together<br>• From the beginning, middle, and end, I know... | Put all the ideas together<br>• *First he..., then, she...* |
| Create a movie<br>• *I see*<br>• *I sensed that* | See the story<br>• *While I read ___, I saw...* |
| **...as they read.** | **...as they read.** |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Phonological Awareness

Debbie Milner

Phonological awareness involves the understanding that language is made up of sounds, and phonemic awareness involves the ability to hear and manipulate the smallest units of sounds in words (phonemes). If children have difficulty with distinguishing sounds auditorily, they will experience problems with spelling words in writing and decoding words in reading. Teachers may help students develop their phonological awareness through many types of classroom activities, as listed below. Once students develop a certain level of phonological awareness through oral activities, they are ready for reading and writing activities pairing letters and sounds, which will further develop their phonemic awareness. The following insights as to how the sound system of our language works are important for children to have as they emerge into reading and writing. Included are some sample activities that will help children gain these understandings.

1. **Sentences are made up of words**. During modeled or shared writing, have the students count on their fingers the number of words in the sentence they are going to write. Put a line on the chart paper for every word in the sentence and point to the lines as you orally rehearse the sentence together. ("Wordness" is an essential understanding for emergent readers and writers.)

2. **Words rhyme when they sound the same at the end**. Make poetry a daily part of your classroom curriculum. Emphasize the rhyming words when you read poetry aloud. Play oral cloze games where the children "fill in the blank" with a rhyming word: "The bear is sitting on a _____." (Understanding about rhyming will help students in reading and writing as they learn about word families and about figuring out new words from words they know.)

3. **Words are made up of syllables**. Say the students' names and clap the syllables: Ja-son, Ma-ri-a, Tim-my, Ann. During modeled or shared writing, demonstrate that some words have more than one clap, but you only put one line down for that word. (Understanding that words can be made up of more than one syllable is important as students develop their 1:1 matching.)

4. **Words may sound the same at the beginning or at the end**. Play with tongue twisters and read books and poems with alliteration. Play games where the students are to raise their hands when they hear a word that "doesn't fit": e.g., jacket, jump, hat, jeans, jelly, comb; or stop, cap, top, moon, hip. (Emergent readers initially use beginning and then ending sounds when learning to read and write.)

5. **You can make a word by blending its individual sounds**. Say a word slowly, separating the sounds, and have the students "say it fast": s – u – n = sun; sh – ar – k = shark; A – n – a = Anna (Blending sounds will help students decode some words later on when reading.)

6. **You can break a word into its separate sounds**. During modeled or shared writing, have the students say a phonetically regular word slowly (pulling the sounds out of their mouth like slowly pulling bubble gum) and listen for the individual sounds: can = c – a – n; lot = l – o – t. Draw boxes for each sound in the word and push a penny into each box as you hear a new sound — "can" would have three boxes; "shark" would also have three boxes for the 3 sounds. (Students use this process of listening to the sounds in words when they are beginning to write.)

7. **You can make new words from words you know by changing some of the sounds**. Play games with the students where you tell the students, "Say snowman. Now say it without snow." – "Man." "Say hand. Now say it without the /h/." – "And." "Now add /s/ to

the beginning." – "Sand." (Hearing word parts, especially the onset and rime, and being able to manipulate the sounds will help students read and spell words they don't know by making connections to wo"ds they do know – e.g., If this is "book," then this word must be "took.")

# Fluency

Victoria P. Winterscheidt

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?*
*I see a yellow bird looking at me.*

Martin, 1983

*In the great green room*
*There was a telephone*
*And a red balloon*
*And a picture of*
*The cow jumping over the moon.*

Brown, 1947

While reading the preceding lines, did you hear in your mind a certain rhythm that naturally attached itself to these lines of text? Did you hear the "music" as you read these lines? You probably read with fluency the words of Bill Martin, Jr. and Margaret Wise Brown because the text was easy, familiar, and was attached to a syntactic model in your memory.

Fluency in reading is much more than reading text quickly. Fluency relates to the phrasing, pauses, rate, and placement of emphasis that a reader links to text in order to gain meaning from what the author has written. Fluency in reading is important to comprehending the author's intended message in text.

Reading fluency is defined by Harris and Hodges in *The Literacy Dictionary* (1995) as "1. The clear, easy, written or spoken expression of ideas. 2. Freedom from word-identification problems that might hinder comprehension in silent reading or the expression of ideas in oral reading; automaticity. 3. The ability to produce words or larger language units in a limited time interval." Fluency is the flow of reading.

Fluency is seldom achieved on the first reading of a text unless the piece is lacking in challenges for the reader. Fluent reading is usually the product of a reader's engagement or repeated engagements with easy text. In order to achieve fluency most readers will need to reread the text. The reader who is not free from the challenge of focusing on word identification problems, as noted by Harris and Hodges, may be unable to achieve fluency in reading.

Text that is well written using familiar syntax, or language patterns, can support readers in achieving reading fluency. If a reader knows how a text should sound, then the reader can connect in a meaningful way to the "music" in his or her ear.

When a reader approaches text with unfamiliar or unusual syntax, there is less potential for the reader to fluently control the text. Expository texts are often examples of unusual or unfamiliar syntax. The teacher who reads aloud expository text familiarizes students with the syntactic patterns that they will encounter as they read for information. Understanding expository syntax will lead to increased comprehension of the content of these information-filled pieces.

It is important to provide opportunities for readers to practice the reading aloud of a broad sample of types of literature. The demonstration and use of distinct language patterns found in varied types of literature is essential to the reader's comprehension of a spectrum of texts. In order to "tune" the reader's ear to the syntactic differences associated with specific genres, many types of literature should be read aloud to students and read aloud by students in the classroom and at home. Opportunities for student practice of fluency may include the reciting of rhymes and poems, the performing of plays or readers' theatre, or reading aloud to others. Poetry, written direction, math story problems, narrative and expository text all have rhythms and syntactic structures that can be modeled and discussed with readers.

The control of punctuation is an important element in the production of fluent reading. Recognizing the meaning of various types of punctuation is important to achieving reading fluency. The reader primarily focused on speed may be interacting with the text at a purely visual, or print, level and may not be noticing the meaning implied by the phrasing or grouping of words. Reading the punctuation can be as important to fluency and comprehension as the reading of the words.

A meaningful connection to the text may be inaccurately assumed when listening to some oral reading, especially the oral reading of some second language learners. Often ESL students have become familiar with the "music" of the English language before they have developed a strong vocabulary. These readers can demonstrate fluency and appropriate phrasing in their oral reading, even though they do not control word meanings. Because of the lack of understanding of vocabulary and context, these fluent sounding readers will attain only a superficial comprehension of text.

Care should be taken not to assume that simply because the reader reads with fluency that significant comprehension has occurred. Unfortunately, not all readers who demonstrate fluency and phrasing are concentrating on story meaning. Some of these readers may be focusing only on the "sound" of the words. For this reason, any work on fluency — the "sound" of reading — should be accompanied by work on comprehension — the "meaning" of reading.

## Suggestions for teaching fluency

- Model and specifically address fluency. Do "think-alouds" to explain why the text was read as it was.
- Teach fluency using only independent level text.
- Choose literature that lends itself to fluent reading. Texts that include rhyme, conversation, and repeated refrains are especially helpful to teaching fluency.
- Record student reading and then listen together to the playback of the tape. Discuss opportunities for improved fluency, then record the student's reread.
- Teach students how to use and "read" punctuation.
- Provide students with opportunities to participate in readers' theater performances.
- Practice echo reading.
- Listen to recorded stories on tape.

### Bibliography


Allington,R. (1983). Fluency: the neglected goal. *The Reading Teacher*, 36, 556-561.

Beaver, J. (1982). Say it! Over and over. *Language Arts*, 59, pp. 143-148.

Harris, T. and Hodges, T. (1995). *The Literacy Dictionary*. International Reading Association, Newark, DE.

Kosiken, P. and Blum, I. (1985). Paired Repeated Reading: A classroom strategy for developing fluent reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 70-75.

Martinez, M. Roser, N. and Strecker, S. (1998/1999). I Never Thought I Could Be a Star: A Readers' theater ticket to fluency. *The Reading Teacher*, 42, 690-693.

Zutell, J. and Rasinski, T. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency. *Theory into Practice*, 30, pp. 212-217.

# Vocabulary

Victoria P. Winterscheidt

How important is the teaching of vocabulary to reading comprehension? For the answer to that question, let's go to Lewis Carroll's famous poem, "Jabberwocky:"

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves*
*Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:*
*All mimsy were the borogoves,*
*And the mome raths outgrabe.*

"Jabberwocky" perfectly illustrates how essential the understanding of word meanings is to the comprehension of text. Though many readers can pronounce the words of Carroll's poem, few readers will speak with authority when questioned in regard to the meaning of the poem "Jabberwocky." Although the English language sometimes can be tricky, English is, in fact, a quite decodable language. Unfortunately, the reader who merely decodes text without attaching meaning to the words will gain no understanding of the author's intent.

The study of vocabulary is basically the process of building networks of "knowns." Each time a reader encounters an unfamiliar word, a search begins in that person's mind to determine whether a connection can be made to some familiar word already in his or her known vocabulary. The definition of the word will be most memorable if the learner can make a connection between the new word and a familiar word or context. Sometimes the connection will be analogous: "It's like. . . ." At other times the known word may be an example of an opposite, or inverse, relationship: "It's the opposite of. . . ." Whether the known word is bigger, smaller, like, or unlike the unknown word is not a significant issue. It is the ability to relate the unknown to the known that is the foundation of major vocabulary learning.

Good vocabulary instruction is more than having learners look up words in a dictionary or embed new vocabulary words in isolated sentences. According to William Nagy (1988), in *Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension*, the essential components of vocabulary instruction are: integration, repetition, and meaningful use. Integration provides the learner with chances to make connections to new word meanings by surrounding the new words with a context of known words. Through integration, new vocabulary is attached to a body of language or content that may be already familiar in some way to the reader. Repetition is important to solidifying word meanings across contexts. Meaningful use helps the learner to understand the potential utility of a word. Vocabulary instruction that includes these three elements emphasizes to the learner that word study is more than just defining words.

Selecting high-utility words for study is important in considering the problem of meaningful use in vocabulary study. The opportunities for integration and meaningful use are limited with foreign or archaic words such as *guillotine* or *awl*. Although *guillotine* is an interesting word, it is probably not worthy of extended word study. Teachers should make sure that time spent in vocabulary study will reap long-term benefits for the learners.

In her article, "Exploring Informational Text with Students" (*Colorado Reading Council Journal*, 1997), Lori Conrad includes a list of words such as *however, unless,* and *similarly,* that she describes as "signal words." These "signal words" appear frequently in informational texts but are often overlooked during vocabulary study. Although these words seem familiar, readers often misunderstand them. This lack of understanding can cause confusion for readers, especially in expository text. Because of the potential for integration, repetition, and meaningful use, the "signal words" are excellent candidates for direct vocabulary instruction.

The dictionary continues to be used as the primary tool for vocabulary instruction. Students should be taught how to effectively use a dictionary, but they should be aware that there are other valuable tools to be used in building a storehouse of helpful vocabulary. Context clues can be helpful in predicting word meanings, but such clues may be apparent only if the reader already knows a great deal about the words being considered. Illustrations, graphs, charts, and glossaries are another set of resources useful to building vocabulary knowledge. A good thesaurus should sit on the shelf next to the dictionary, and students should know how to use it. A thesaurus may offer readers and writers several choices with which to connect the new words to understood synonyms.

Some vocabulary learning is incidental, the result of reading a well-written book, rich with new and interesting vocabulary. Other incidental vocabulary learning may occur when students are involved in thoughtful discussions or conversations that relate to topics of interest. But, not all important vocabulary knowledge will emanate from informal learning. Teachers must take responsibility for offering students opportunities for the direct study of carefully selected words and then provide meaningful opportunities for the use of those words.

Suggestions for effective vocabulary study: (Watts, 1995)

- Students are provided multiple exposures to words in a variety of contexts over time.
- Words are taught in the context of a story, theme, or content area unit.
- Teachers help students activate prior knowledge when learning new words.
- Relationships are drawn between new words and known words and concepts.
- Students are taught to use context clues and dictionaries to enhance their word knowledge.
- Students are encouraged to interact with the words so they are able to process them deeply.

**Bibliography/Resources**


Armbruster, B. and Nagy, W. (1992). Vocabulary in Content Area Lessons. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, 550-551.

Conrad, L. (1997). Exploring informational text with students. *Colorado Reading Council Journal*, 8, 4-11.

Cooper, J. (1997). Developing vocabulary: Words and meanings beyond the beginning literacy level. In, *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning*. (pp. 227-296). Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Hadaway, N. and Young, T. (1994). Content literacy and language learning: instructional decisions. *The Reading Teacher*, 47, 522-527.

Johnson, A. and Rasmussen, J. (1998). Classifying and super word web: Two strategies to improve productive vocabulary. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 42, 204-207.

Kibby, M. (1995) The organization and teaching of things and the words that signify them. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 39, 208-223.

Nagy, W. (1988). Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Newark,De/Urbana,IL: IRA/NCTE.

Rupley, W., Logan, J. and Nichols, W. (1998/1999). Vocabulary instruction in a balanced reading program. *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 336-346.

Schwartz, R. and Raphael, T. (1985). Concept of Definition: A key to improving students' vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 39,198-203.

Smith, C. (1990). Vocabulary development in content area reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, 508-509.

Watts, S. (1985). Vocabulary instruction during reading lessons in six classrooms. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 27, 399-424.

The Whole Brain Game, Creative Mind Games.

# Word Learning Strategies

Wendy Downie

Our goal in teaching word learning strategies is to help students become competent and confident readers. As readers learn more efficient ways to access visual information in the text visual processing strategies require less attention and the readers become increasingly fluent. Pinnell and Fountas write in *Word Matters* (Heinemann, 1998, pg. XV) that students need knowledge of an ever-increasing core of words, knowledge of patterns that occur in words, and knowledge of strategies for solving words. In order to support students in developing this knowledge, teachers need to provide appropriate strategic instruction.

Learning how words work is an important element in helping students become efficient visual processors.

## Word Study Instruction

Teachers need to provide daily opportunities for students to focus on the study of words and word elements. Word study instruction follows the same format as Readers and Writers Workshop. It begins with a *demonstration*, a short, focused lesson on a specific word-solving principle or strategy. It is followed with an *application* activity during which students are engaged in open-ended investigations with manipulatives and writing experiences to practice and apply the word-solving principle or strategy to new words in different settings. The last component is a time for the group to share insights and examples, and to work together on group charts or word walls.

## Word Learning Activities

There are five general categories of strategies that students can use to solve unknown word problems when reading. The chart below identifies these categories and lists a few of the activities that could be included in word study instruction. It is important to note that there is often overlapping of strategies and activities in each of the categories.

| Categories of Word Learning Strategies | Word Study Instruction | Word Learning Activities |
|---|---|---|
| Phonemic strategies — how words sound | DEMONSTRATION (whole class, small group, or mini-lesson for readers' or writers workshop) APPLICATION (centers, independent work, partners, or whole class) GROUP SHARE (whole class, small group, or partners) | Picture sorting letter sorting and matching songs, chants and rhymes |
| Visual strategies — how words look | | Word walls, word sorts, making and breaking words/chunking words |
| Morphemic strategies — what words mean | | Word origins word webs synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms |
| Connecting strategies — how words connect or are similar | | Word searches building words using known words to learn new words |
| Inquiry strategies — how to use reference materials to learn about words | | Personal word walls/dictionaries, proofreading skills dictionary and thesaurus skills |

There are many excellent resources for more information about word learning strategies and activities including *Word Matters* (Pinnell and Fountas), *Words Their Way* (Bear), and several books by Patricia Cunningham

# Ways of Teaching and Learning

Laura Benson with Victoria P. Winterscheidt

Honoring and using Margaret Mooney's *Reading To, With, and By* framework of learning, the following is a profile of options for large group, small group, and independent reading as we create ways for our students to learn:

## Revealing Reading-Thinking *To* Our Students

- Often in large groups, sometimes in small groups, and during conferences
- Reading to our students
- Modeling/demonstration/think-alouds of our reading processes, strategies/tools of thinking, choices, and purposes for reading
  —teacher has the responsibility for reading text.
  —students act as apprentices.
- Shared reading — teacher shares the work of reading inviting student participation while continuing to demonstrate processes and strategies. Students join in or have a go at reading the text. As students take over more of the reading work, the teacher observes student reading behaviors.
- "To" experiences develop: (Source: Victoria Winterscheidt)
  +language patterns/builds cognitive framework for language
  +background knowledge/ concepts
  +fluency models
  — and, most important —
  +joy/passion/desire for reading.

## Reading *With* Students:

- Often in small groups, sometimes in our large group — (Learning and Practice Nests)
- **Teacher and students do task together.**

  Teacher introduces text and shares or gives the beginning work of reading to the students. As the teacher and students talk, read, and think their way purposefully through a text, the teacher gradually releases responsibility for the reading of the entire text to the students.

- **Guided Practice/Guided Reading**

  Walking through the text together, the teacher (or student as teacher), provides introduction to text

  – introduces important messages, themes, and/or key learnings to consider or look for during reading

  – alerts students to possibly tricky parts or aspects of the text or genre and/or demonstrates and explicitly reveals effective strategies for comprehension and retention (I.e., modeling how to draw inferences, *"This part of the poem talks about the 'raven void of heart' and I think the raven is really the girl who killed Emily because earlier in the piece it said...,"* or illuminating how connections are made between this text and others of the same genre or content. *"This chapter talks about fractions. The information here reminds me of the book*

*Alligator Pie. I am thinking about how to divide by twelve by remembering how the alligator cut up the pizza pies. That will help me figure out this more complex explanation."*

Before, during, and after the children's independent reading of this text, the teacher and student. Make predictions about what information they expect to find in the reading of (this) text:

- articulate connections between this text and previous texts/background knowledge for genre, content, author, and/or personal experiences, etc
- ask one another questions to clarify and deepen understanding of text; and/or-develop a synthesis of reading upon completion of the text (to name just a few possibilities)

Engaging in **reading together** — *with* experiences — builds bridges for comprehension.

- In reading a piece together, we model our prereading and first-reading strategies for one another. I might model and discuss how I think about what I already know about the topic (activating background knowledge). *"Reading the title, I am thinking about the lab experiments we did yesterday, and I am also reminded of that piece Ryan wrote about the variables necessary to achieve combustion."* or *"Hmm. What new questions will be answered here? Earlier in this book, I read a chapter that talked about principles of democracy. I think that there is a connection here."* "Conveying" students from a (part of a) text we read together to their independent reading of the text with guided practice helps "to get our (group) conversation of the classroom into our heads. As they read on their own, I want my students to internalize strategies they have seen modeled and use the discussions we have had in class to deepen their understanding.

- "With" experiences develop: (Adapted from the work of Victoria Winterscheidt)
  + strategies
  + fluency
  + joy/passion/desire
  + purposes for reading — especially with regard to developing a community of literacy fellowship
  + self-confidence
  + willingness to work through the hard work of reading, take risks strengthening a child's resiliency

### Reading *By* Our Students

- Most often independent/On My Own reading experiences — children should be spending most of their literacy block here — reading on their own with our support in the form of frequent conferring

- Student has full responsibility for reading of text.
  –Teacher provides support and feedback encouraging and expecting independence
  –Teacher monitors students' comprehension and engagement.

- "By" experiences develop: (Adapted from the work of Victoria Winterscheidt)
  + independence
  + a child's desire to read
  + confidence/voice
  + self-selection strategies
  + strategies "on the run"
  + fluency
  + ability to learn from reading

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Grouping Practices

Lori Conrad

For many of us, puzzling around the whys, whens, and hows of creating intimate learning groups dogs our instructional planning. We know that whole class experiences are efficient and grounding, but they can miss the specific needs of some students. Small clusters can be more effective, but they can become rigid groups based on students' perceived abilities. Individual conferences offer exceptional opportunities for deep learning connections, but can be difficult to manage and track.

In our efforts to find the best mix of all of these three classroom structures, it's important to ask ourselves a few questions:

- What literacy experiences should all of my students experience together? These opportunities are the kind that create a community anchored by a shared history of reading and writing events. These are also opportunities which effectively launch in-depth studies inquiring into the things successful readers/writers think, believe, and do.
- What literacy experiences are best accomplished in small clusters? These opportunities draw small groups of learners together because they share a similar instructional need or capacity level, a common area of interest or passion, or a deep social desire to work together. These opportunities provide us with a richly intimate setting in which we can guide our students' literacy learning, gradually releasing the responsibility of independence to them in a supportive way.
- What literacy experiences are best explored by individuals? Since ownership and individual choice are critical elements in learning to read and write, it only makes sense that the bulk of our students' time be spent reading and writing independent texts. When they're engaged in their own literacy, they develop the life-long feel of a reader and writer. It also provides the time for the individual accountability we all strive for as a bottom-line literacy achievement.

As we ask these questions, it's also important to link the answers we find to the opportunities we give students to share their learning with us and their fellow learners. Each structure offers a different level of **access** (e.g., we can respond more specifically to an individual writer during a one-on-one conference than we can working with a small group of writers) and **precision** (e.g., conducting a "status of the class" [Atwell, 1998] at the end of a whole group shared reading gives an overall picture of the ways students are going to "try on" new learning).

Combining these three grouping practices, like the ingredients in your favorite chocolate cake, isn't an exact formula. Sometimes, a group of learners will benefit most from additional shared experiences — much in the same way certain ovens make it necessary to extend a recipe's baking time. And sometimes, children will become so connected with the subject they'll need more time to write on their own — like the little brother who doesn't like almond flavor, so you substitute vanilla extract. It's the artistry behind the decision making that makes literacy instruction work!

To read more about making wise grouping decisions, look to . . .

Intellectual Invitations: Helping Readers Grow with Grouping Practices by Laura S. Benson (*Colorado Reading Council Journal*, Spring 1996)

*A Child Went Forth: Reflective Teaching with Young Readers and Writers* by Janine Chappell Carr (Heinemann, 1999)

*Developing Life-Long Readers* by Margaret Mooney (Richard C. Owens, 1988)

Atwell, N. (1998) *In the Middle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

# Reading Nest Options

Laura Benson

Why group our students? How can we group our students? Gathering children together for guided practice, we consider the following:

**Groups are developed to address**

- Levels (Ian Morrison, 1994)
- Cues (Ian Morrison, 1994)
- Strategy use (Ian Morrison, 1994)
- Comprehension (Ian Morrison, 1994)
- Passion-based groups (Benson, 1996)
- Social-based groups (Benson, 1996)
- Needs-based groups (Benson, 1996)
- Interest Groups (Cooper, 1997)
- Strengths/needs groups (Cooper, 1997)
- Mini-lesson groups (Cooper, 1997)
- Discussion groups (Cooper, 1997)
- Project groups (Cooper, 1997)
- Modeling groups (Cooper, 1997)

**Additional considerations**

- What kind of group will help this child?
- How can/will I manage shifts in the group?
- What are my other students doing as I work with a group?

**References**

Benson, Laura. (1996). *Intellectual Invitations.* Colorado Reading Council Journal 7, 18-41.

Cooper, David. (1997). *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Morrison, Ian. (1996). *Getting It All Together.* Lower Hutt, New Zealand: The Wright Group.

# Guided Reading Over Time

Debbie Milner

Children who are just learning to read will benefit from small instructional reading groups in which the teacher guides the students as they read through books at their instructional level. These groups are needs-based and short-term, as the teacher reconfigures the groups as a result of ongoing assessment. The scaffolding and focus strategies provided in Guided Reading groups change as the students move from being emergent readers to early fluent readers, as shown in the table below.

| Components of a Guided Reading Lesson | Emergent Readers (Reading Recovery Levels 1-4 for Early Emergent Readers and 5-14 for Upper Emergent Readers) | Early Fluent Readers (Level 15 — Easier Chapter Books) |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Select a book.** | Early Emergent Readers: highly predictable text, natural language, repetitive patterns, high picture-text match, familiar concepts and few words per page.<br>Upper Emergent Readers: books that are predictable and about familiar concepts, but with fewer pictures, more print on a page, and more story. | Books with more complex story lines and character development, significantly more print on a page, fewer familiar concepts, and fewer illustrations. "Easy to Read" books and early chapter books that offer a variety of reading genres (fairy tales, mysteries, nonfiction) are appropriate at this developmental level. |
| **2. Set the scene.** | The teacher:<br>1. Introduces the book and tries to activate students' background knowledge so they can make predictions and personal connections to the text.<br>2. Does a "story walk" through at least part of the book to help children construct the meaning of the text.<br>3. Uses language of the text to help children predict what the book will say. | The teacher introduces the text and activates students' background knowledge by having them make predictions based on the cover, the title, the author, the genre, etc. Students are encouraged to think of questions they may have about the text before reading it. |
| **3. Read the book.** | All students read the whole book simultaneously but not chorally. Initially, students will be reading out loud with quiet voices, but as they develop more proficiency, they should begin to read silently. The teacher listens to each child and prompts for strategies. | The students read the text silently, a few pages at a time, stopping to discuss their connections, questions, and comments, along the way. |
| **4. Work on skills and strategies.** | Early Emergent: Directionality, 1:1 matching, sight words, using beginning sounds, pictures, and pattern to read.<br>Upper Emergent: Using M, S, and V cues together; more sight words; chunking words and using word patterns; fluency; making predictions and connections. | More advanced word work strategies; comprehending strategies, including making predictions, using prior knowledge, drawing inferences, determining what is important, clarifying unknown words, visualizing, summarizing, and synthesizing. |
| **5. Extend the book.** | Discussions with high level questions; repeated readings; sentence strip activities; interactive writing; responding to the story in writing and art. | Discussions with high-level questions; responding in writing in response journals (predictions, questions, summaries, connections); fill out graphic organizers; read books related by author, theme, genre, or subject. |

# Guided Reading Teaching Map

Laura Benson

***Launching the Reading [Teacher and Children]***

- Text orientation
- Putting book language into the children's ears (Butler)
- Preview pictures
- Title page reading/introduction
- Word work
  - -find/locate words (known and find new words)
  - -distinguish features of words
  - -identify words with wipe off-board
- Thinking strategy learning (highlight focus strategy)
  - -activating/building b.k.
  - -monitoring understanding and repair/fix-up
  - -determining importance — asking questions, predicting, inferring
  - -synthesis/retelling — visualizing/imaging

***Children independently read text***

- Practice focus strategy
- Tracks print with finger (emergent)
- Children read at own pace
- Teacher selects one child as focus child for running record

***Reinforcing strategies [teacher nudges]***

- Thinking strategies
- Cross-checking
  - -picture clues
- Word work
  - -first letter and last letter
  - -onsets and rimes
  - -check work with your finger
  - -look for patterns as you read

***Responding to the text and rereading text***

- Cousin text/more reading
- Oral response/talk
- Written response
- Artistic response

# Guided Reading Lesson Structure and Options

Laura Benson

## Setting the Scene

- **Book introduction**

  Put the language of the book into their ears; choose and teach just a few words to aid the children's understanding

- **Strategy prompt**

  This is the focus of the lesson...the teaching point. Target a strategy which will help build a "self-extending system" within the children/help them read text independently

  Teach the strategy via modeling or revisiting earlier lessons; read a bit of the text together to have the children practice the strategy with you before they try it on their own

  Focus on one strategy over a long period of time (3-6 weeks); start the strategy study with easy text and move to increasingly challenging text

## Children Read the Text

- Children employ the strategy you prompted as they read
- Make sure that the children spend most of their time reading
- Confer with children one-on-one assessing their reading with a running record or anecdotal notes
- Meet with one group while the other children continue to read independently

## Revisit Text/Responding to the Text

- This is a "Comprehension Check"
- Talk about what the children understood from their reading
- Discuss and/or assess how the strategy helped them read
- Embed writing into the lesson giving the children the opportunity to synthesize their reading and helping us assess their understanding and use of strategies
- Skill focus: from the text, periodically pull out a skill which will help the children develop their cueing systems, word recognition, language, etc.

## Cement Learning/Closure

- Encourage children to use focus strategy as they read texts back in class and at home
- Plan for future reading (in your group, at home, and back in class)
- Read "cousin text" — texts that will extend their understanding of the concepts in the text

# Literacy Centers

Debbie Milner

One of the most common questions teachers ask is, "What should the rest of my class be doing when I am meeting with my small reading groups or with individuals for reading conferences?" The simple answer is that the rest of the students should be engaged in reading and writing as well. However, that's not as simple as it sounds. Literacy centers can be a powerful way to structure opportunities for students to be independently engaged in meaningful reading and writing, as long as the centers are not disguises for skill-and-drill worksheet and seatwork activities. To ensure that centers offer students rich and important opportunities for reading and writing, keep in mind the following points:

1. **Encourage students' independence** by being clear and explicit with them about the expectations, procedures, and purposes of each of the centers. Build centers one at a time with the children and spend significant time modeling the procedures and training the students to be independent. At the end of each literacy block, debrief the students about how the centers went.

2. **Have a clear rotation system** that students understand, whether it is a task board for each of the groups or individual plans that the students fill out for themselves. Offer choices of where to go and what to do, in addition to requiring certain centers.

3. **Develop centers that promote all of the language arts**:

   a. **Reading of new books** (Library Center, Listening Center)

   b. **Rereading of familiar text** (Big Book Center, Familiar Book Baskets, Poetry Center, Read the Room, Daily News Center, Pocket Chart Center, Library Center, Listening Center, Readers Theater Center, Desk Centers for reading response journals and follow-up work to Guided Reading)

   c. **Listening and Conversing** (Listening Center, Buddy Reading, Readers' Theater Center, any activities that encourage students to work together)

   d. **Writing** (Message or Letter Writing Center, Writing Center for journals or writing folder work, Publishing Center, Poetry Center, Research Center)

   e. **ABC and Word Study** (ABC Center, Word Work Center, Word Wall Center)

4. **Do not put any activities into the centers that you have not introduced and modeled in your whole group and small group instruction**. Students should be practicing what they have been taught, not trying to learn something brand new.

5. **Group students heterogeneously** so children with different ability levels can work together. However, in some centers, such as the Word Work Center, there should be a range of activities that are appropriate for meeting the different needs of the students.

6. **Change the centers over the course of the year** – e.g., save a couple of boxes of new books to add to the Library Center in January; have different types of poetry activities throughout the year; have different purposes for writing in the Writing Center; make the word work more challenging as students progress.

7. **Keep asking yourself**: Are the students spending a significant amount of time doing lots of authentic reading and writing? Are the students engaged in *important* work that will help them to become more proficient in reading and writing? Are the centers helping my students to become full-fledged members of the literacy community?



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Creating Time for Literacy

Carrie Ekey and Laura Benson

Time. Like gold, we need to spend it thoughtfully. As teachers, we sometimes feel the gentle glide of time's sand crystals as an avalanche. The following pages profile a few possible schedules — schedules that give children lots of time to practice reading while also ensuring that students have access to:

- us, their teachers, via conferences, large group, and small group gatherings
- one another, their peers, via large group, small group, and partner gatherings
- content area learning, via embedding the focus and content of other disciplines into our literacy blocks
- numerous opportunities to read and write for numerous reasons and purposes
- The principles of instruction with the literacy block are:
- Reading, writing, and thinking are modeled and practiced as processes in which the student constructs meaning.
- Large blocks of uninterrupted time are provided for modeling and independent practice.
- The teacher provides a "release of responsibility" through modeling the processes in a shared session. Then an allotment of time is provided for students to be guided individually or in small groups in the use of the strategies. Finally, time is set aside for independent practice in material that is selected by the teacher or by the individual student.
- Skills and strategies will be taught and practiced within authentic context rather than through unrelated workbooks or skill sheets.
- Continuous assessment will guide useful, specific feedback to students and provide the foundation of daily instruction.
- Time and environment will allow for student interactions to clearly summarize and share their learning. Students should be expected to answer the question, "What are you learning?" throughout each instructional component. (A meta-analysis by McREL in 1998 determined that this one factor will improve student achievement by 33% as measured by standardized tests.)
- Reading and writing strategies that are essential tools to learn material in various content areas will be modeled and practiced in the literacy block as well as throughout the school day for both primary and intermediate students

Some issues to consider as a school begins a dialogue about implementation of a literacy block are:

- The literacy block of primary grades will usually be longer than for intermediate grades due to an increased focus on content area learning with older students. A different framework will need to be constructed for half day kindergarten classrooms.
- The literacy block may be decided upon for the entire school, by primary and intermediate teams, by grade level teams, or by individual teachers.
- The amount of time needs to be adapted to meet specific student needs. Therefore, literacy blocks may need to be extended with younger students or students who struggle with reading and writing.

- The time allotments do not need to be overly prescriptive but used only as guidelines for teachers.
- If daily time allotments do not fit with the needs of the students, a specific time block may be extended some days and then not occur on other days. An example of this is spelling instruction. It may occur for 30 minutes on some days and not at all on other days.
- **The critical element of a literacy block is not the time frame. Rather it is the exemplary instruction within the time frame and the student learning that results from it.**

An example of a framework for a literacy block used in Jefferson County Schools is:

| | Instructional Component | Minimal Time Allotment in minutes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Primary | Intermediate |
| Continuous Assessment Skill and Strategy Instruction Sharing Learning | **Shared (Modeled) Reading** — skills/strategies taught within context using big, books, poems, articles or anthology | 15 | 10 |
| | **Guided Reading and/or Literature Discussion Groups —** • engage students with text at the group's instructional level • engage students in application activities including independent reading, written responses to reading, and literacy-focused centers (occurs during the guided reading time when not in teacher-directed groups) | 60 | 45 |
| | **Skills and Strategies for Word Work** — spelling, handwriting, and word study | 30 | 10 |
| | **Self Selected Reading** | 15 | 15 |
| | **Shared/Modeled/Interactive Writing** | 15 | 10 |
| | **Guided/Independent Writing** | 30 | 30 |
| | **Reading Aloud to Students** | 15 | 15 |
| | **Total Time Allotment for Literacy Block** | 3 hours | 2 hours, 15 minutes |

As a school begins to think about implementing a literacy block, the following questions may be used to guide their dialogue:

- What are your goals around implementing a literacy block and how will you monitor your progress towards those goals?
- What practices are already in place which are effective and what evidence of those successful practices is present?
- What pieces of the framework are you unclear about and what staff development is necessary to support one another in your understanding of those pieces?
- Which practices need to be consistent across teams and which may be more flexible?
- How does this fit with your current classroom schedule and what changes will need to be initiated?
- What physical resources (such as books) are necessary to implement the model?
- What are the obstacles of implementation and how will you overcome them?

**Bibliography**

Fountas, Irene C., and Gay Su Pinnell, *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1996.

Mooney, Margaret E. *Reading TO, With, and By Children*. Katonah, New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers, 1990.

Routman, Regie. *Conversations: Strategies for Teaching, Learning and Evaluating*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2000.

Taylor, Barbara M.,et al. "Effective Schools/Accomplished Teachers" (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement), *Reading Teacher*, Vol. 53, No.2, October 1999.

Zemelman, et al. *Best Practice for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998

# Daily Schedules: Sculpting Time for Literacy

Laura Benson

| | Readers' Workshop | Readers'/Writers' Workshop |
|---|---|---|
| 8:30 | Reading begins when children arrive<br>• Independent reading of self-selected text or guided reading/book club text<br>• Newspaper reading | Reading and/or writing begins when children arrive<br>• Independent reading and /or writing of self-selected texts or guided writing/book club text<br>• Newspaper reading |
| 8:55 | **Focus lesson gathering**<br>• Determining when a focus for reading learning will benefit all students (if gathering large group/entire class together)<br>• Modeling my reading, emphasizing the focus strategy or skill ***to*** the students<br>• Engaging in shared readings, practicing the focus strategy ***with*** the students<br>• As students leave the focus lesson, "assigning" and expecting them to use the strategy/skill modeled as they go to independent reading | **Focus lesson gathering**<br>• Determine one focus for reading and writing learning which will benefit all students — one focus strategy in both reading and writing will help to make the connections between reading and writing and create opportunities for reading and writing to "cross-fertilize"<br>• Modeling reading or writing process, highlighting the focus strategy or skill ***to*** the students<br>• Engaging in shared readings, practicing focus strategy ***with*** the students<br>• As students leave the focus lesson, "assigning" and expecting them to use the strategy/skill modeled as they go to independent reading |
| | **Independent Reading**<br>• Students read for at least 60 minutes a day<br>• As children read independently, I read for 5-20 minutes, modeling my passion for the written word<br>• Confer with individual students, taking observation notes and assessing the child's use of focus strategy/skill, demonstrated strengths and needs, and literacy goals established by the student and teacher | **Independent Reading and/or Writing**<br>• Students read and/or write 120 minutes a day<br>• As children read and/or write independently, I read or write for 5-20 minutes, modeling my passion for the written word<br>• Confer with individual students, taking notes of my observations and assessing the child's strengths and needs, the child's employment of our focus strategy/skill, and literacy goals established by student and teacher |
| | **Guided Reading Groups (Small Group Nests)**<br>• As students read independently, also gather small groups together to further practice and clarify focus strategy or skill, often (but not always) in "just right" text. Note: I don't see all groups every day; I see the more emergent students more often, sometimes "double-dosing" the most emergent readers to give them extra support and practice.<br>• After modeling and creating numerous opportunities for bringing the students together, they can meet for book clubs or literature circles independently to talk about their reading/writing | **Guided Practice in Reading and/or Writing** (small temporary groups)<br>• As students read independently, also gather small groups together to further practice and clarify focus strategy or skill. Note: I don't see all groups every day; I see the children who need more support more often. I also gather children into passion-based, needs-based, and socially based groups.<br>• Students also engage in small groups with one another without always having teacher present |
| 11:00<br>11:15 | **Sharing Circle**<br>• At the end or near the end of the workshop, gather children (or have them stop reading wherever they are) to share our thinking about using the focus strategy | **Sharing Circle**<br>• At the end or near the end of the workshop, gather children to share their thinking with one another, talk about their use of focus strategy and what they have learned about themselves as readers and writers |
| 12:10<br>12:30 | **DEAR/FRED/SSR**<br>• Children read independently in texts of their choice<br>• Read ***to*** children three times a day | **DEAR/FRED/SSR After Lunch**<br>• Children read independently in texts of their choice<br>• Read ***to*** children two to three times a day |

When it makes sense, embed content area learning themes into reading and writing workshops. In other words, when studying plant life, Colonial America, or cells and matter, for example, I model my thinking with texts reflective of these units of study. Additionally, I engage students in guided reading and independent reading of books/pieces from text sets I have developed for content-area learning themes.

# Strategies for Teaching Text Structures

Wendy Downie

To unlock the complexity of expository text, students need strategies to sort and categorize information. Text structures, cognitive frameworks used to achieve a particular purpose, can provide this organization. There are six text structures used in expository writing, each illustrating how ideas are connected and their relative importance. Text structures can provide students with a schema for negotiating meaning from expository text.

## Learning About Text Structures

Many students need explicit instruction in text structures to develop strategies so that they can better comprehend text. The best way to teach text structures is by using them in writing. Graphic organizers provide a visual framework to assist students in planning their writing. They help students to visually see the interrelationships between ideas. In the chart below, a representative graphic organizer is presented for each text structure.

Students also use graphic organizers to follow an author's organizational pattern while reading. It allows students to categorize informational items and identify important ideas from the text. The graphic organizers are tools for students to use until the text structures become internalized schema.

## Learning to Recognize Text Structures

Once students have learned some of the text structures, the challenge is to help them recognize which text structure is being used. One strategy is to help students determine the author's purpose. The purpose-setting questions below guide students in identifying which text structure an author would employ based on his or her purpose. Signal words can also provide additional information for students. These words alert the reader to possible text structures.

Learning about text structures allows students to develop schema and strategies to comprehend expository text independently. They become aware of the author's purpose and are better able to see relationships between ideas. Text structures provide students with the cognitive framework they need to become competent readers of expository text.

| Structure | Graphic Organizers | Purpose-Setting Qs | Signal Words |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sequential | #1 #2 #4 | How do you make...? What happened? | First, second, etc. then, after, before |
| Enumerative | 1, 2, 3, 4 | Do you want to give a list and tell about each thing? | First, second, also, for example, finally |
| Descriptive | | Do you want to tell about something? | No specific signal words |
| Compare/Contrast | | Do you want to show similarities and differences? | Different from, same as, alike, compared to |
| Cause and Effect | Cause Effect Effect | Do you want to tell why something is/happened? | So that, because of, result of |
| Problem/Solution | Problem<br>Possible Solutions<br>Outcomes | Do you want to tell about a problem and offer solutions | A problem is<br>Problem is solved by |

Adapted from *Structures for Reading, Writing, Thinking*, Jo Anne Piccolo, 1996.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Teaching Text Structures to Readers and Writers

Lori L. Conrad

Whether telling about the movie we saw on Saturday night, jotting down the recipe for our famous chocolate chip banana nut bread, or recounting the events that led up to a recent news story, we all use some kind of structure to organize our ideas. If we're successful, our story makes sense. If we're not, what we end up with is a collection of unrelated bits and pieces that don't convey the meaning we have in mind. We can find these same structures in the texts we read and those we write.

It's important that we share this kind information with our students. With this knowledge tucked into their literacy tool belt, they can better determine what's essential in their reading, what's added in as detail, and what they had better plan for when writing themselves. Knowledge of text structure can also help our students create more comprehensive retellings when their reading capacity is assessed using tools like the DRA, the Q R I. 2 (Leslie, L and Caldwell, J. 1995), and CSAP.

## Types of Text Structures

When we look at the kinds of printed texts students are most often invited to read or write, the structures seem to fall into three broad categories: narrative, poetic, and expository. Within each of these categories, there are a number of possible structures a reader/writer might find:

- narrative structures — beginning/middle/end, setting/character/ problem/events/solution, flash forwards/flash backs, parallel plot
- poetic structures — rhyme, rhythm, use of white space, repetition
- expository structures — problem/solution, compare/contrast, time order, cause/effect, enumeration (Harvey, 1998)

## Strategies for Exploring Text Structures

Like any literacy skill, knowing how to use text structures when we're reading and writing can be developed over time and across experiences. We can gradually invite our students to try their hand at using this knowledge when reading and writing themselves. As we plan for this kind of focused, embedded instruction, we can:

- Begin by sharing the paths we take when trying to make sense as readers and writers. We need to talk aloud about the clues we use to uncover the structure of various texts, and how we use those same clues when we write to let our readers know what's most important in our writing. These "think-alouds" (Davey, 1983) are often the most powerful part of our teaching because it lets our students see us as learners, too.
- Create a collection of writing samples that effectively illustrate various narrative and expository text structures. We can invite our students to read through these examples and discover the techniques/cues the authors used to give their readers a heads-up about what was most important in their text. Students' own writing should certainly become part of these growing collections.
- Develop a list of possible "clue words" (see Vacca and Vacca, 1986, for an initial listing) authors might use to tip their readers off to the text structure they're using in a particular piece of writing. These lists shouldn't be treated as the be all and the end all, but instead should represent a jumping-off point in determining what's essential. After all, "Once upon a time,"

probably begins a fairy tale, with its predictable prince and princess, bad witch, and happy ending. Not every fairy tale begins with these four words, but they are a pretty strong clue for a reader.

- Explore the ways a story or informational piece can be represented visually. By creating graphic organizers that resemble the specific text structure (see Conrad, 1997 for a few examples), we can help students see the way a text is set up. These visual images can be useful for both planning new pieces of writing and remembering texts read. After all, picturing the major battles of the Civil War on a timeline or sorts makes 'holding on to' that information a bit easier.

- Investigate ways to use text frames (Fowler, 1982 and Armbruster, Anderson, and Ostertag, 1989) as templates for both planning and retelling. Many of us have invited students to complete story maps and story circles, where phrases like "In the beginning . . ." "The character tried to . . ." "The problem was solved . . ." guided their thinking about the stories they read. These same kinds of frames can be developed to guide students' remembering/retelling of informational pieces. Again, these text frames should never become an end unto themselves, but instead a supporting scaffold for readers' and writers' active comprehension.

With any good strategy instruction, students need to see the *so what* behind these orchestrated opportunities to explore text structure. Otherwise, they become just another collection of activities to do that don't seem to be connected to the deliciously hard work readers and writers must take on — that is, to compose, make sense of, and make use of the printed text around them.

To read more about examining text structure, look to . . .

*Exploring Informational Text with Students* by Lori L. Conrad (Colorado Reading Council Journal, Spring 1997)

*Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing and Research in Grades 3-8* by Stephanie Harvey (Stenhouse Publishers, 1998)

### References


Armbruster, B. B., Anderson, T. H., Ostertag, J. (1989). Teaching text structure to improve reading and writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, 130-137.

Conrad, L. L. (1997). Exploring Informational Text with Students. Colorado Reading Council Journal, 8, 4-11.

Davey, B. (1983). Think aloud: Modeling the cognitive process of reading comprehension. *Journal of Reading*, 27, 44-47.

Fowler, G. L. (1982). Developing comprehension skills in primary students through the use of story frames. *The Reading Teacher*, 36, 176-179.

Harvey, S. (1998). *Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3-8*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Vacca, R. T., Vacca, J. L. (1986). *Content Area Reading*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

***Text Frames***

Problem-Solution Text Structure

_____ had a problem because _____
_____
Therefore, _____
_____
As a result, _____

**Problem** = something bad, a situation that people would like to change. **Action** = what people do to try to solve the problem. **Results** = what happens as a result of the action, the effect or outcome of trying to solve the problem.

Compare/Contrast Text Structure

Comparison

_____ and _____ are similar in several ways. Both _____ and _____. _____ and _____ have similar _____. Finally, both _____ and _____.

Contrast

_____ and _____ are different in several ways. First of all, _____, while _____. Secondly, _____. In addition, while _____. _____ Finally, _____, while _____ _____

Sequence Text Structure

Here is how a _____ is made. First, _____. Next, _____. Then, _____. Finally, _____.

Cause and Effect Text Structure

Because of _____, _____. _____ caused _____. Finally, due to _____, _____. This explains why _____.

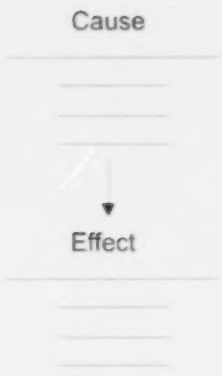
Time Order Text Structure

The events leading up to _____ were:
First, _____.
Second, _____.
Third, _____.
Fourth, _____.
Finally, _____.

adapted from B. Armbruster, T. Anderson, J. Ostertag

## Sample Types of Graphic Organizers for Common Text Structures

***Cause/Effect***




***Compare/Contrast***

***Problem/Solution***

***Time/Order***

Adapted from J. Dole

# Reading in English: Helping English Language Learners Build on What They Know

Sally Nathenson-Mejia

Students who are learning English as a second language bring a different perspective on the world based on the culture and language which they have been brought up in. As classroom teachers, we can help English language learners by assessing and valuing what they already know and understand about the way language works and what school is all about. Then, we can use what they know as a foundation for learning about US culture, schools and how English works.

There are many effective methods being used for teaching children to read. These methods work with children whose native language is English because they understand much about how English works even before they enter kindergarten. For students learning English as a second language, it is important that teachers understand the different levels of language that must be acquired in order to be successful in school. There are several stages of second language proficiency that range from the pre-production stage all the way to the advanced stage. These stages can be categorized into two major dimensions of language proficiency: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS, Cummins, 1986) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP, Cummins 1986). We will look at these two dimensions of language proficiency, how they relate to different age groups, and what teachers can do to facilitate their acquisition.

## Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

This is the easy, surface level, or social language talk that we all learn fairly quickly in a second language. Remember learning "Hola, ¿cómo esta usted?" in high school? This is a formulaic phrase that we can learn and apply in various situations, therefore we get to use it over and over again. It makes us feel more comfortable with the language.

Characteristics of interpersonal language, both oral and written, include:

- formulaic phrases
- face to face interactions – facial expressions, gestures, and body language are very helpful in communicating meaning
- conversations around immediate objects and situations – having the actual article that is being talked about or read about, e.g. the ball, the apple, a toy representation of the animal, etc.
- personal public information – names, ages, likes, pets, family, etc.

## Early Grades

Young children tend to pick up oral interpersonal language quickly and effectively. In general, they worry less about pronunciation and perfect grammar, thus they are more willing to use the new language.

Naturally this depends upon each individual's comfort level, individual personality, and the environment they are in. If they are teased, pointed out, or made fun of, English language learners will be less inclined to use English. Also, if a child is the only one in the class who is just learning English, he or she may be much more reticent to speak.

Teachers of young children need to help them develop their oral interpersonal English abilities and at the same time they need to teach them concepts about reading and writing. Often, English language learners in preschool, kindergarten and first grade will come to school with little or no experience with reading and writing in either their native language or in English.

We can facilitate the acquisition of English and the acquisition of literacy skills with young children by:

- encouraging children to communicate in English without overcorrecting them
- showing an interest when they speak and write in their native language, encouraging them to share these abilities with others
- providing many opportunities to speak, read, and write about topics of immediate interest with support from face to face interactions and real artifacts
- choosing read-alouds, chants, and songs that
  - build on the children's background knowledge
  - have repetitive phrases which contain vocabulary they can use in other situations
  - demonstrate written English and the connection between what we hear and what we see (voice/print match)
- placing English-language learners in small groups with children who will support and encourage their use of interpersonal language

Teachers of older children need to help them develop their oral interpersonal English abilities and at the same time they need to help them learn the specifics about written English. Children in second to sixth grade will have varying familiarity and abilities with literacy in their native language. It is important that teachers find out what children's literacy abilities are in their primary language in order to use that knowledge as a foundation for learning about English.

We can facilitate the acquisition of interpersonal English and the acquisition of literacy skills with older children by:

- encouraging children to communicate in English without overcorrecting them
- showing an interest when they speak and write in their native language, encouraging them to share these abilities with others
- providing many opportunities to speak, read, and write about topics of immediate interest with support from face to face interactions and real artifacts
- placing English language learners in small groups with students who will support and encourage their use of interpersonal language
- choosing reading instruction materials which build on students' background knowledge, includes vocabulary and phrases they can use in various situations, and demonstrates the specifics of written English
- choosing reading instruction materials which are appropriate for the students' age and interests as well as their abilities
- encouraging parents to continue the development of the primary language at home, these skills will transfer positively to their English language acquisition

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency

This is school language, academic language which all students need in order to be successful in school. When we don't specifically provide instruction in the vocabulary, structure, and context of academic language, many English language learners fall behind. Students who are very proficient at interpersonal English (BICS) may give the false impression (through no fault of their own) that they know enough to understand the more abstract and complex language of academic content areas.

As teachers, we need to make sure we assess students for their background knowledge of academic concepts, vocabulary, and written language structures. In this way we will know what we need to teach them so they can be successful throughout school.

Characteristics of academic language, both oral and written, include:

- vocabulary-specific to content areas: science, math, social studies, language arts, etc.
- concepts specific to content areas
- written language structures specific to textbooks and lectures: cause/effect, compare/contrast, chronologies, etc.
- conversations and texts which are removed or distant from the actual topic
- abstractions, inferences, speculations, suppositions, theories, criticisms, etc.
- tests, exams, essay responses, reports, research

Teachers of young children can help them gain experience with academic language through a variety of age appropriate activities. This is not teaching children to read and write, rather it is teaching them how to use reading and writing to solve academic problems and to gather and communicate information. For example:

- introduce brief units of study based on background knowledge the children already have
- introduce vocabulary and concepts using as much of real life as possible, such as field trips and real artifacts
- read to and facilitate the reading of age-appropriate expository materials
- structure and facilitate oral discussions of content concepts based on the concepts and vocabulary being studied in class
- assign and facilitate the writing of brief expository text based on concepts and vocabulary being studied in class
- put children in small work groups with students who will support and encourage their use of academic English

Teachers of older English-language learners need to make sure they give them the background knowledge needed to comprehend more sophisticated academic materials. There are two aspects of learning in a second language that teachers need to be aware of: content concepts, and academic literacy.

Content concepts include the concepts around science, math, social studies and language arts. For example, in science, concepts include the life cycle, the solar system, the water cycle, etc. In math concepts include the calculations, as well as fractions, decimals, etc. In language arts they need to be familiar with verbs, nouns, articles, adverbs, subject/object, etc.

Academic literacy, on the other hand, crosses the content areas. Students need to know how textbooks are structured, what written academic language is like, how to gain information from

content texts, how to do research, how to write a report, how to work in collaborative groups, and how to work individually.

Some students in third grade and above may come to school with significant academic backgrounds. They will have background knowledge in the various content areas and know generally what schools expect of them. These students need to learn vocabulary in English, the conventions of written academic English and how to gain information from English texts. They also need to learn the specific school expectations around assignments, group work, and exams.

Other students will come to school with little academic experience and will need help in acquiring both the content concepts and academic literacy. Teachers can help older students by:

- assessing students' background knowledge in specific content areas, this will help teachers build on what students already know
- begin to teach English vocabulary and written language structure based on concepts students are already familiar with
- use familiar English vocabulary as a bridge to enhance content knowledge or to introduce new content
- introduce vocabulary and concepts using as much of real life as possible, such as field trips and real artifacts
- read to and facilitate the reading of age appropriate expository materials, avoid round-robin reading, encourage silent reading and structured discussion
- structure and facilitate oral discussions of content concepts based on the concepts and vocabulary being studied in class
- assign and facilitate the writing of reports and research papers based on concepts and vocabulary being studied in class
- teach specific test taking skills and comprehension of test language
- put English language learners in small work groups with students who will support and encourage their use of academic English

Since the fastest and easiest entrance to English language literacy is through a strong foundation in one's native language, it is desirable that students' first language literacy be developed at home or in school whenever possible (Snow, Burns, Griffin 1998). There are several program structures which offer different levels of support in the primary language (Miramontes, Nadeau, Commins 1997) which schools can explore. However, when this is not possible, English language learners can be very successful in ESL programs where their native language and culture is valued and when we pay attention to the specific kinds of knowledge and experiences they need to succeed academically. We need to remember that it takes time, guidance, and encouragement to acquire a second language.

**References**

Cummins, J. (1986). "The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students." In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework* (3-50). Los Angeles: Evaluation Dissemination, and Assessment Center.

Miramontes, O., Nadeau, A., and Commins, N. (1997). *Restructuring schools for linguistic diversity*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., and Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

# Special Considerations for Young Budding Readers in Kindergarten

Pat Lusche

As a kindergarten teacher and Reading Recovery® teacher, I have many thoughts about nurturing the literacy potential in each kindergarten child. My ideas expressed here echo Brian Cambourne's *Conditions of Learning* (1984): immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, approximation, practice, response, and engagement.

A child's learning environment is key. Literacy should permeate the environment. Books must be easy to find (and organized in ways which help the children take responsibility for their return). Literacy is incorporated into every learning experience be it play, art, science, or math. Additionally, children "live" literacy when the environment — including labels, songs, graphs, charts, messages, activities, and bulletin boards — radiates words and the thinking of the children. It is critical to have the children's published work displayed and accessible throughout kindergarten classrooms. As kindergartners first begin to define themselves as successful readers, they need a risk-free environment which fosters, respect, initiative, and active exploration free from anxiety. Celebrate the children's approximations and make it easy to succeed.

**Literacy learning should be a social act.**

Oral language is the foundation of kindergarten curriculum. Get your students talking (which is usually not too difficult). Most kindergartners have not yet developed an inner voice. Talking increases their rate and the depth of their ability to understand (an important precursor to reading and writing acquisition).

After literacy is modeled by the teacher, provide children with guided practice before independence is expected. Closely observing a child's reading during guided practice (and conferring) directs the teacher to that child's cutting edge of learning, thus, informing future teaching decisions. Likewise, emergent writers need scaffolding in their writing to help move them to the next step. Guided support allows for efficient teaching. Teachers do not need to teach what the child is already able to do.

**Practice is everything.**

Repeat, repeat, repeat. Kindergartners need many opportunities to revisit and practice their learning. Books which should be continually available (make sure that a large number of these are books which they children can read and understand on their own. Repetition, ritual, and routine bring comfort to the "known" and enable entrance to the "new." Concepts should be taught through a multisensory approach in a multitude of modalities.

Ownership increases engagement and kindergartners learn by active engagement. Children need opportunities to learn from one another and to make decisions regarding their own learning. Valuing their choices is critical. Teachers should closely monitor the balance between their own contributions and those of the students.

**Making connections between learning experiences is critical.**

Cueing systems and reading strategies are most efficiently taught *within* text in an integrated format. Within text, children are addressing directionality, voice print match, sight words, cueing systems, and comprehending strategies all at once. Children need to practice putting all the pieces of their literacy together "on the run." There is no lock-step hierarchy of isolated skills. Emphasize connections between reading and writing. What the children learn in one area can be a link to new learning in another area. For example, known sight words give children tools for

writing and spelling. The children's published writing can be used as their text for reading. Illustrating their own writing promotes the understanding of using picture cues in reading. Incorporate music and movement whenever possible. Music has been proven to improve students' academic performance and memory. Additionally, music rejuvenates and commands attention and honors the power of fun in learning.

**Family support matters.**

To enhance learning, involve the families. This is an age when families have their greatest influence. Help parents know how to help their children in ways which align with your instructional program. Keep your students' families informed about their child's learning and invite parents in often as observers or volunteers. Their wisdom and expertise is a wonderful resource (and, of course, their involvement should not be limited to literacy). An additional consideration for cultivating more parent involvement within your community might be to offer a literacy training session with parents, as many parents are struggling with literacy themselves.

# Kindergarten Readers

Lori L. Conrad

Our room had settled into the hum that comes from children engaged in the work of school. Everyone had found a comfortable place to read. I had just sat down next to one of my kindergartners, ready to confer with him about his developing reading skills when a loud, happy voice broke through the quiet. Looking over, I saw Caitlin, all 32 pounds and 3 feet of her, reading Chicka Chicka Boom Boom at the top of her five-year-old voice. She had carefully positioned the book so that it rested open in a chair beside hers and was using one of our class pointers as she read. Now, she wasn't yet matching the pointer, or her voice for that matter, to Bill Martin's words. But she was fluently "reading" the story with great animation and joy. For Caitlin, she was doing exactly what good readers are suppose to do — she was interacting with text, making sense of a well-loved story.

We can all think of other children, who just like Caitlin, embraced reading the way they do a best friend — full of gusto and excitement. We can also name others who aren't quite so enthusiastic about sitting down with books. As kindergarten teachers, it's our job to make sure all of our students grow to mirror Caitlin's exuberance as they grow in their capacity and sophistication as readers.

## Seeing Reading as a Part of Our Lives

Young children notice everything. From the slightest change in their daily schedule to the varying hues of the sky, they attend to the details of their world. This innate fascination with what's around them, coupled with their penchant for asking questions, creates the perfect opportunity for us to show them how print is an integral part of their lives. We can help them become "print watchers" by:

- inviting them to find the environmental print (like cereal boxes and soda labels) they use every day to make important decisions like what to eat
- collecting well-loved family stories told over and over again, and putting these oral treasures down in writing
- creating a basket full of old favorite books from home — the ones children have heard so many times they know the stories by heart
- searching for print in every corner of the classroom and their homes, and recording their discoveries along with inferences about the use/meaning of each example on large classroom charts
- interviewing important others (e.g., parents, siblings, friends) about all the ways they use reading each and every day to make sense of their world

Once kindergartners' awareness about print is piqued, there's virtually no limit to the things they'll notice. Letters, words, labels, stories, and information will call to them, "Come, read me!"

## Choice and Variety

In her book, *In the Company of Children*, Joanne Hindley said it best: "choice is everything." And this couldn't be more true than our sharing control of what to read with our kindergartners. Inviting them to chose their own reading materials supports their growing independence, honors their interests and background experiences, and demonstrates our trust in their capacity to know what is most appropriate for their own learning.

- Every day, we can offer them choice in:
- their reading topic — showing the vast world of possibilities in books
- their comfort level with different books — underscoring how the range of both difficulty and familiarity impacts our reading success
- their purpose for reading — demonstrating the variety of reasons why we read
- the form/genre of their reading — modeling that we read different kinds of text all the time

When we walk into a bookstore or a library, much of our excitement comes from the fact that we're making the selections. We may ask for some assistance. We may work from recommendations other readers we trust have made. And sometimes, we may wander a bit until a title or topic jumps out at us. In any case, our reading is made more inviting because we get to choose from a wide variety of possibilities. The same should be true for our kindergartners.

The power in choice all depends on our capacity to stand alongside our kindergarten readers and let them see how we choose the stories, information and poems that fill our reading baskets.

## Providing Thoughtful, Appropriate Invitations to Extend and Deepen Reading

Sharing our insights into what successful readers know and are able to do is one of the most important tasks we undertake in creating classrooms where young readers can thrive. With our guidance, children can better navigate new texts, untangle problem passages, and strive for fuller understandings as they read. Working with the entire class, with a small group of readers, or with a single kindergarten, we can share:

- the procedures that help make reading time go smoothly (e.g., how to select an appropriate collection of books to read during workshop time, what to do if you need help and I'm busy working with another reader, what to do if you think you might be "done" but there's still more reading time)
- the concepts of print (including things like directionality, voice/print match, and book handling skills) that make reading texts possible
- strategies for understanding texts
- strategies for understanding unknown words in texts (including effective use of all cueing systems — semantics, syntax, and graphophonics)
- ways to respond to our reading
- ways to share our reading with others
- ways to link our efforts as readers with our efforts as writers

## Response

Sitting beside a kindergartner who is reading gives us the opportunity to watch and listen as the magic of reading happens. We become privy to the child's thoughts about what successful readers know and do. We can know firsthand the child's strategies for reading new words. We can invite reflection and problem solving. We can ask the student to explain his or her process for making sense of reading. We can get to know the student as a richly unique individual.

To make responding an effective part of our classroom work with kindergartners, we must:

- have regular, one-on-one conferences with our readers so they can share what they know and what they are coming to know about reading
- create regular opportunities for readers to share their thoughtfulness with others
- find ways to keep track of the rich data that emerges from sharing

## Time

For any of this to work, we need to carve out elongated sacred time for our kindergartners to read every day. It isn't enough for them to hear us read or to do "activities" designed to simulate some small portion of reading. It means that every day, kindergartners should be invited to fall in love with the world that sits between the pages of books.

To expand the opportunities our kindergartners have to read whole, meaningful texts, we must:

- make quiet reading, where everyone is reading, a regular part of our daily routine
- make independent reading "the choice" when small groups of readers are working with the teacher
- integrate opportunities to read into all content areas through shared and guided reading experiences, and the range of materials children may select from when reading independently
- make reading a regular part of children's "homework" (alongside daily writing)

To read more about creating classrooms where readers flourish, look to . . .

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* (Stenhouse Publishers)

Sharon Taberski. *On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3* (Heinemann)

Janine Chappell Carr. *A Child Went Forth: Reflective Teaching with Young Readers and Writers* (Heinemann, 1999)

### Reference

Hindley, J. (1996). *In the Company of Children.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

# Kindergarten Writers

Lori L. Conrad

In response to an invitation to compose his own page in our class book What We Wore On Our First Day of School, William looked up at me and said, "But I don't know how to write." His voice was filled with a genuine concern that reminded me of the awesome responsibility every kindergarten teacher feels.

We've all heard responses just like William's. We've watched our five-year-old school novices begin their journey of becoming authors — sometimes with an "I can do anything" attitude, sometimes with fearful tears. What can we do to help make the road to literacy more inviting, with fewer potholes and hairpin turns and with more scenic vistas and helpful road signs? Our task is to help kindergartners value the writing know-how they already possess while building an even more sophisticated menu of options that will serve them throughout their writing lives.

## Living a Writerly Life

From noticing the range and uses of the print surrounding them to finding writing topics in their everyday experiences, asking children to live their lives the way writers do (Harwayne, 1992) is the first step toward a lifelong love of print. In our classrooms, there are so many things we can do to nudge this way of life. We can:

- share what we notice about words and the ways print works in our everyday life
- keep an ongoing list of the ways we use writing (from grocery lists and letters home, to entries in baby books, stories about lost teeth, and research on what dog to buy)
- maintain a standing homework assignment to watch out for writing ideas in our daily lives
- take regular "writing walks" around our school community and talk about all the things we notice that could lead to rich writing

When children enter our classrooms each morning with, "I know what I'm going to write about today!" leaping from their mouths, we know they're living a writerly life.

## Choice

"When we invite children to choose their form, voice, and audience as well as their subject, we give them ownership and responsibility for their writing" (Calkins, 1984). And, since one of our core goals for kindergarten is to develop independence, there is nothing more essential in supporting an emergent writer's growing capacity than to give him control of what he writes. When young children know the power of choice, they know we honor all the knowledge they bring with them to our classrooms — that they're not empty writing wells waiting to be filled. Every day, we can offer them choice in:

- their topics —allowing them to decide what they'll write about
- their audience — showing the many potential "listeners" for their work
- their purpose for writing — demonstrating the variety of why we write
- the form their writing will take — modeling that writing doesn't need to fit into a formula
- the way they use letters, words and pictures to represent their ideas — underscoring the incredible power of children puzzling through the spelling of unknown words as a way of understanding the graphophonics of our language



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The power in choice will depend on our capacity to stand shoulder to shoulder with our kindergarten writers and let them see how we negotiate the menu of writing options each new day offers.

### Exploring Genres

We've all known young writers who get stuck in (or get tired of) a single genre of writing. An "I Love Mom" story is followed by another and another and yet another. Because kindergarten is such a wonderful year of exploration, it only makes sense to invite kindergartners to try all sorts of writing. Asking young writers to explore different genres doesn't have to be limited to a two-week study of poetry in May or the once-a-year research report. Instead, it can emerge naturally from their experiences as readers and their own desire to try their hand at what they've read. It is our responsibility to:

- demonstrate our own attempts at writing across genre
- provide them extensive experiences with a wide range of writing forms (including first person narrative, fictional stories, non-fiction/information and poetry) during read-alouds, in small, guided groups, and during independent reading
- compose a variety of genres during shared and guided writing
- include all types of writing in our classroom libraries

If we hope to nurture writing success in all our students, we need to help them expand their horizons to include the many types of writing out there in their literate world.

### Finding Writing Mentors

We've all had the experience of reading a masterful passage of writing and thinking, "I'd love to write like that!" Young writers have the same feelings about their favorite authors. We can help kindergartners hitch their wagons to these stars by:

- studying the craft favorite authors use to create wonderful pieces of writing
- encouraging children to read their favorite authors "down to the bone" — that is, to read as many of the author's texts as possible
- using classroom time to look deeply into why we always come back to certain books and/or authors — what is it about this work that pulls us in?
- trying to try our hand at a certain writer's craft during shared and guided writing experiences

Helping children find mentors not only provides wonderful writing models, it also invites them to peer into someone else's writing process, try it on for size, and come away knowing a bit more about their personal writing style. (Fletcher, 1993; Harwayne, 1992; Hindley, 1996)

### Keeping Ongoing Collections of Writing

When we clean out our children's closets, we're reminded by the too-short sleeves and the too-small sneakers just how much they have grown since last year. Inviting our kindergartners to keep ongoing collections of writing offers this same kind of important reflection. Whether in a writer's notebook, a folder of writing examples, or a chronological scrapbook of samples, collecting and analyzing our students' writing offers everyone the chance to hold time in our hands and describe the growth that might otherwise go undetected.

To make writing collections manageable, we need to find realistic ways to:

- add to them on a regular basis
- revisit them, looking for both growth and next steps
- share ownership of the collection with our students and their parents
- use them as the context for writing conferences
- use their rich content as the backbone of our teaching and the essence of our response to students

### Providing Thoughtful, Appropriate Invitations to Extend and Deepen Writing

Whether we call it "working in the Zone of Proximal Development" (Vygotsky,1962), "demonstration and expectation" (Cambourne, 1995), "mini-lessons" (Calkins, 1984), or "actions" (Graves,1994), we all know children benefit from our sharing specific insights into writing. In their book, *Craft Lessons* (1998), Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi explain that children can become more sophisticated writers as a result of our specific invitations to think deeply about the writer's craft. The explicit information we share with young writers should include:

- procedures that help make writing time go smoothly (e.g., where we keep our writing materials, what to do if you need help and the teacher is busy, what to do if you think you might be done but there's still more writing time)
- ways to "read the world" (Graves, 1994) looking for writing topics
- traits good writing has in common (using excellent published texts, our own writing, and our students' writing as the models of good writing)
- techniques successful writers use for crafting rich texts (Fletcher, 1993, 1998)
- strategies for spelling unknown words (Wilde, 1991)
- strategies for refining initial writings content and convention

### Time

For any of this to work, we need to carve out elongated sacred time for our kindergartners to write every day. It isn't enough to have a writing center that children may choose. That doesn't send a strong enough message. It doesn't go far enough in letting our students know just how important we think writing every day is to their growing sense of literacy.

To expand the opportunities our kindergartners have to write, we need to:

- make time for quiet writing, where everyone is writing, a regular part of our daily routine
- integrate opportunities to write into all content through math logs, classroom calendars, science observation journals, etc.
- make writing a regular part of children's homework (alongside daily reading to/by)

### Response

Sitting down beside kindergartners while they compose offers an invaluable opportunity to peer into their growing capacity to write. We can observe the way they develop ideas and record

sounds/letters/words. We can ask them to reflect on her strengths and questions. And, most important, we can respond to them. It's an immense responsibility, because our young writers are extremely vulnerable. Our responses must be honest and gentle, specific and loving. We have to remember that "our words will literally define the ways they perceive themselves as writers." (Fletcher, 1993).

To make responding an effective part of our classroom work with kindergartners, we need to:

- have regular, one-on-one conferences with our writers so they can share what they know and what they are coming to know about writing
- create regular opportunities for writers to share their work with peers and other audiences other than ourselves
- find ways to keep track of the rich data that emerges from sharing

To read more about creating classrooms where writers flourish, look to . . .

Joanne Hindley. *In the Company of Children* , (Stenhouse, 1996)

Janine Chappell Carr. *A Child Went Forth: Reflective Teaching with Young Readers and Writers* (Heinemann, 1999)

Katie Wood Ray. *Wondrous Words* (NCTE, 1999)

**References**


Calkins, L. (1984). *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cambourne, B. (1995). *Toward an educationally relevant theory of literacy learning: Twenty years of inquiry*. The Reading Teacher, 49, 182-190.

Fletcher, R. (1993). *What a Writer Needs*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fletcher, R. and Portalupi, J. (1998). *Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Graves, D. (1994). A Fresh Look at Writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harwayne, S. (1992). Lasting Impressions. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hindley, J. (1996). *In the Company of Children*. York, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press.

Wilde, S. (1992). You Kan Red This! Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

# Support for Special Education Students and Teachers

## Perspective on Literacy Needs of Special Education Students

Lynn Kuhn

### Why Do Special Education Students Have Difficulty Learning to Read, Write, and Spell?

Research continues to support the premise that reading disability is a language-based learning disability. The primary identifying characteristic is a specific difficulty learning to read words accurately and fluently. Differences in brain structure, organization, and function are related to difficulties in processing written and spoken language. Consequently, learning to read, write, and spell in the early grades is perplexing because of problems associating the spoken sounds of the language with the written symbols representing those sounds. The following conditions can contribute to the difficulty to read: poor phonological awareness (identification of sounds in a word, ability to segment, blend and manipulate the sounds in words), visual and verbal memory problems, and expressive language problems such as word retrieval, to name a few characteristics.

John Pikulski, Past President of International Reading Association (IRA) and professor of education at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, has expressed the growing concern of over-identification of children who have reading problems as learning disabled. The IRA took the position that no child who has a serious reading problem should be identified as learning disabled based on that problem alone, unless that child has received appropriate early intervention in reading instruction. He went on to say that appropriate reading instruction means that students encountering difficulties in learning to read in grades kindergarten through third have been provided with small group (no more than five students), preferably individual reading instruction based on a verified model (research-based and journal documented) of early intervention reading instruction for at least 30 minutes each day for at least one full year. This early intervention reading instruction should be conducted by a licensed/certified reading specialist or by a classroom teacher who has been trained in a verified model of early intervention instruction. However, while there is ample evidence of the efficacy of early intervention programs, some children still need special and continued support throughout their school careers.

Recent research supported by the U. S. Department of Education sheds light on the skills and understandings about literacy that children must acquire in order to learn to read. These findings can help young children avoid the struggle, frustrations and serious educational problems that inevitably occur from reading difficulties. For children with learning disabilities, these reading skills and understandings about literacy are essential to their learning. Therefore it is extremely important that appropriate reading instruction, which combines phonics instruction with rich literature environments and opportunities to write, be incorporated effectively.

National longitudinal studies report that more than one in six young children (17.5%) will encounter a problem learning to read during their crucial first three years in school. Scores of these children are classified as learning disabled. The category of learning disabilities encompasses at least half of the children identified for special education, making this the largest category of special education. Of the population of identified learning disabled students, 80% have primary weakness in reading, with related deficits in spelling and writing. The majority (80-90%) of these reading deficits are associated with linguistic deficits. In practice, a learning disabled child is usually one who has an average IQ but is not reading. Therefore, it is

undeniable that many children have reading disabilities, however, it is also true that many reading problems could be averted with proper instruction.

The most effective approach to reading disabilities for most children is prevention. Children who are given high-quality pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and early elementary programs, supplemented as necessary with one-to-one tutoring and other supports, are substantially less likely to ever need special education services. Only after such preventive approaches have been conscientiously applied and individual literacy plans have been implemented with minimal success, should assignment to special education be considered.

In *The American Educator* (6:1998) article "Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance," the authors stated that for children who have been assigned to special education for reading disabilities, effective strategies are often essentially the same as for other low achievers. These children must have their reading difficulties diagnosed and then must have individual strategies developed to help them thrive, often including systematic instruction in phonics. Children with more significant reading difficulties may need services on a long-term basis, often with extensive modifications of curriculum.

Three leading researchers in the field of reading instruction, Ed Kameenui of the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators at the University of Oregon, Marilyn Jager Adams of the BBN Corporation in Cambridge, MA, and Reid Lyon of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), have synthesized years of research which reveals the important principles for improving early reading instruction. While these strategies are effective for virtually every child, they are absolutely critical for children with learning disabilities. The results reveal that children with learning disabilities need to:

- understand all the major elements of language
- develop vocabulary strategies — word structure and morphology
- learn the alphabet, the letter recognition and formation
- understand the relationship between letters and words
- understand that language is made up of words, syllables and phonemes (individual sounds) — phonological awareness
- learn letter sounds (phonemic awareness)
- understand how to sound out new words
- identify words in print accurately and easily (fluency)
- know spelling patterns
- have opportunities to have access to decodable, connected, controlled- vocabulary text to practice decoding, automaticity and observing the sound-spelling relationship
- learn to read reflectively (comprehension strategies, higher level thinking)
- read texts at their independent reading level and abilities

Every student should receive a comprehensive and balanced reading/literacy curriculum. The central link for special education students with literacy needs is that there is effective and efficient communication among all involved with the child's literacy instruction and there is a coordinated and consistent approach to literacy. Based on the synthesis of the reading research children with reading, spelling and writing delays may require the instruction to be more explicit, systematic and cumulative within the presentation of the literacy curriculum.

The 1997 reauthorization of Public Law 94-142 ensures the basic right to appropriate education for all children with disabilities, including specific learning disabilities in reading and writing. Congress intended that special education should address the problem of identifying and treating reading disabilities during the early school grades. The law contained a definition of specific reading disability that has often contributed to an unfortunate delay in identification and treatment: "to be eligible for special education placement, children must exhibit a severe discrepancy, typically 1.5 standard deviation units, between standardized tests of their reading achievement and their general intellectual ability...." (National Reading Council: *Preventing Reading Failure* pg. 268.) In addition, the re authorization addressed the following points that should be strongly considered:

- provide quality instruction in regular education to reduce the number of students needing special education services
- use proven methods and well-trained teachers in Special Education programs
- attend to effective integration of special education and regular classroom instruction
- maintain high expectations for achievement of learning-disabled students
- research studies to determine optimal methods and intensity of instruction and studies of effective practices for preparing teachers to provide services to learning disabled children so Special Education programs will contribute to early prevention and remediation of potential reading disabled children

## Existing Instructional Programs — Commercial

Some of these methods can be reviewed in the book: Clark, Diana Brewster and Uhry, Joanna Kellogg: "Dyslexia — Theory and Practice of Remedial Instruction"

- Alphabetic Phonics (Aylette Cox) — Educator's Publishing Services
- F.A.S.T. Reading Approach (Steve Tattum) — Denver Academy
- Ithaca Sound Reading Program (www.soundreading.com)
- Jump Start Junior (Denver Public Schools) 303-405-6662
- Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes (1-800-233-1819)
- Open Court Reading Program — SRA 1-800-843-8855
- Orton-Gillingham (Dr. Samuel Orton) — Educator's Publishing Services
- Phonographix (Diane McGuiness-Read America) 1-800-732-3868
- Preventing Academic Failure (Phyllis Bertin) — Educator's Publish. Services
- Project Read / Language Circle (M. Enfield and V. Greene) 1-612-884-4880
- Read Well (Primary Reading Program) — SoprisWest 1-800-547-6747
- Recipe for Reading (Nina Traub) — Educator's Publishing Services
- Slingerland Multisensory Approach — Educator's Publishing Services
- Success for All (Robert Slavin — John Hopkins)
- Wilson Reading System (1-800-899-8454)
- Writing Road to Reading / Spaulding Method (Romaldo Spalding)

- Waterford Early Reading Program (computer based)
- Zoo Phonics (1-800-622-8104)

## Instructional Strategies for Special Education Students

Are instructional strategies different for special education students?

Instructional strategies for special education students must be explicitly taught and modeled. For these students to acquire and internalize the strategies, continual opportunities for practice and application are essential. The instructional process gradually evolves from teacher-directed to student-directed. The expectations and outcomes for special education students are the same as for *all* students: to comprehend and strategically read a variety of texts. Thus, most students will benefit from explicit instruction that promotes fluent decoding, vocabulary and comprehension strategies. The instructional journey for special education students varies in degree of intensity and depth, according to the severity of their learning/reading disability.

What are the general characteristics of effective instruction in reading for children who have special difficulties learning to read?

- *Instruction must be more explicit and comprehensive*

  Children with either specific or general learning disabilities, or who are poorly prepared to learn to read, must be explicitly taught most of what they need to know in order to learn to read.

- *Instruction must be more intensive and strategic*

  Increased explicitness requires that more things be directly taught, and children with disabilities, in particular, acquire skills more slowly and need more repetition within varied contexts.

- *Instruction must me more supportive, both emotionally and cognitively*

  Emotional support in the form of encouragement, feedback, and positive reinforcement is required because learning is more difficult and proceeds more slowly.

  Intellectual support in the form of more carefully scaffolding instruction is required because learning is more difficult.

## What Kind of Instruction Helps a Student With Reading Difficulties?

Special education teachers need to understand the structure of spoken and written language. Like all languages, English has a system of rules. Students with reading difficulties do not intuitively learn the rules and code. Thus reading programs that require them to internalize the structure of the language through exposure and memorization of words are not successful. Teachers who understand the language structure and can interpret ongoing, authentic assessments will be able to effectively and initially differentiate the instructional strategies of phonological awareness and how the components relate to word recognition and decoding skills.

The students respond more effectively when the teaching is explicit and the content is carefully planned. The teaching should include an integrated program of phonology, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This teaching should be systematic, direct, sequential, cumulative, and multisensory. At the same time, clinical evidence demonstrates that reading disabled students are better able to store the information in their brains when the presentation and learning accesses several senses simultaneously. Hence, when encoding and decoding are taught systematically and simultaneously they reinforce each other. As one weaves these instructional methods into appropriate contextual reading, the student will have the potential to

become a rapid, fluent, and accurate reader. Without these initial tools, many reading disabled students do not have the cognitive energy to learn efficiently and apply the required components to comprehend text. Consequently, it is essential for teachers to have an in-depth knowledge of what to teach (program content), how to teach the content using multisensory techniques and continuously assessing the student's individual needs.

## General Resources

Bishop, Suzanne and Ashley: *Teaching Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Word Recognition*

Chall, Jeanne, Roswell, F., Fletcher, G., and Richmond, D.: *Teaching Children to Read — A step-by-step Guide for Volunteer Tutors*; Continental Press

Hall, Susan L. and Moats, Ed.D., Louisa C., *Straight Talk About Reading*

Hennigh, Kathleen Anne, Understanding Dyslexia (Teacher Created Materials)

Kameenui, Edward J. and Carnine, Douglas W.: *Effective Teaching Strategies That Accommodate Diverse Learners* (Merrill Education)

Moats, Louisa Cook: *Speech to Print — Language Essentials for Teachers* [Brookes Pub]

National Research Council, *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*

Opitz, Michael: *Flexible Grouping in Reading*; Scholastic

Spear-Swerling, Louise and Sternberg, Robert J.: *Off Track — When Poor Readers Become "Learning Disabled"*

## Instructional Teacher Resources

### Phonology

Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, Beeler: *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children — A Classroom Curriculum*; Brookes Publishing [1-800-638-3775]

Blachman, Ball, Black, Tangel: *Road to the Code, A Phonological Awareness Program for Young Children*; Brookes Publishing [1-800-638-3775]

Blevins, Wiley: *Phonemic Awareness Activities for Early Reading Success*; Scholastic

Catts, Hugh and Vartianinen, Tina: *Sounds Abound — Listening, Rhyming, and Reading*; LinguiSystems

Ericson, Lita and Juliebo, Moira Fraser: *The Phonological Awareness Handbook for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers*

Fitzpatrick, Jo: *Phonemic Awareness*; Creative Teaching Press

Goldsworthy, Candance, L. Ph.D.: *Sourcebook of Phonological Awareness Activities — Children's Classic Literature*

Kaye, Peggy, *Games for Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Read*

O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, Vadasy: Ladders to Literacy — A Kindergarten Activity Book, Brookes Publishing [1-800-638-3775]

Opitz, Michael F., *Rhymes and Reasons: Literature and Language Play for Phonological Awareness*, Heinemann [www.Heinemann.com]

Robertson, C. and Salter, W.: *Take Home: The Phonological Awareness — K-3*

Robertson, C. and Salter, W.: *The Phonological Awareness Kit [Primary (ages 5-8)]*

**Phonics (Word Analysis and Spelling)**

Blevins, Wiley: *Phonics from A to Z: A Practical Guide*; Scholastic

Bolton, Faye and Snowball, Diane: *Teaching Spelling: a practical resource*

Cunningham, Patricia and Hall, Dorothy: *Making Big Words* — Gds. 1-3 and 3-6

Cunningham, Patricia and Hall, Dorothy: *Making More Big Words* — Gds. 1-3 and 3-6

Cunningham, Patricia and Hall, Dorothy: *Month-by-Month Phonics for K, 1, 2, 3* — Systematic, Multilevel Instruction Working With Words; [Carson-Dellosa]

Fountas, Irene C. and Pinnell, Gay Su: *Word Matters*

Fox, Barbara J.: *Strategies for Word Identification — Phonics from a New Perspective*

Henry, Marcia K. and Redding, Nancy C.: *Patterns for Success in Reading and Spelling — A Multisensory Approach to Teaching Phonics and Word Analysis.* [Pro-Ed]

Hong, Min and Stafford, Patsy: *Spelling Strategies That Work*; Scholastic

Lunsford, Susan: *Literature Based Mini Lessons to Teach Decoding and Word Recognition; Scholastic*

Lynch, Judy: Easy Lessons for Teaching Word Families; Scholastic

McDonald: *Bright Ideas Calendar — Phonics 365 Activities*: Gds. 1-3

Mighty Mind: *SMART CUBES* [Jars #1-4]: Teachers children to read and spell basic words.

Templeton, Shane, etc.: *Words Their Way — Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, And Spelling Instruction*

Vail, Priscilla: *Common Ground: Whole Language and Phonics Working Together*

Zaner-Bloser: Activity Phonics — A Kit in a Book: K through 3rd series

**Comprehension**

Drapeau, Patti: *Great Teaching With Graphic Organizers*; Scholastic

Glazer, Susan Mandel: *Reading Comprehension — Self-Monitoring Strategies to Develop Independent Readers*; Scholastic

Harvey, Stephanie and Goudvis, Anne: *Strategies That Work — Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*

Opitz, Michael F. and Rasinski, Timothy V.: *Good-Bye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies*

Robb, Laura: *Reading Strategies That Work*; Scholastic

**Software and Game Suggestions**

DaisyQuest and Daisy's Castle — Phonological Awareness Training

Earobics — Strengthen Reading, Spelling and Comprehension- Cognitive Concepts

Reader Rabbit's Interactive Reading Journey — Learning Company

Torgeson and Bryant: Phonological Awareness Training for Reading [Pro-Ed]

**Books On Tape:** 1-800-221-4792

**Web Sites**

*For reading research:*

http://www.nih.gov

http://www.cftl.org

http:..goldmine.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/teachrd.htm

http://www.aft.org

*For key organizations:*

International Dyslexia Association: www.interdys.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities: www.ncld.org

LD Online: www.ldonline.org

Learning Disabilities Association of America: www.ldanatl.org

Council for Learning Disabilities: www1.winthrop.edu/cld/

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities: http://www.nichcy.org

*For review of educational software:*

www2.childrensoftware.com/childrensoftware

www.childrendomain.com

www.knowledgeadventure.com/products

www.donjohston.com

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Library Resources, Supports, and Partnerships

Bonnie McCune

## Standards in Action

Standards in Action is the premier online resource for Colorado's standards-based classrooms. Teachers, principals, superintendents and district-level administrators rely on Standards in Action for quality classroom materials for their local implementation of Colorado's Content Standards. The service is provided by the Colorado State Library and Goals 2000 Initiative.

Resources are collected from local districts, BOCES, published sources, and state and national education associations.

All classroom materials are aligned with Colorado state (or locally developed) content standards. The submission guidelines and copyright release form are available for download from the Standards in Action Web site, and via U.S. mail, E-mail, or fax.

Standards in Action is provided by CDE at no charge to the education community. All curricular materials are reproducible for classroom use.

- State, district and national model content standards
- More than 200 subject area-specific and integrated / interdisciplinary performance assessments and curriculum units developed and field tested by Colorado teachers
- Model literacy and student achievement plans
- El Alma de la Raza Integrated Curriculum
- ESL Inquiry Kit and Teaching Guide
- Colorado School-to-Career Partnership publications
- ERIC digests and bulletins
- World Wide Web links to publications and online resources of state and national research centers, clearinghouses, professional organizations, and the U.S. Department of Education
- E-mail list, Active Channel, full-text and keyword search

Funding: U.S. Department of Education: Goals 2000 Initiative; Institute of Museum and Library Services: Library Services and Technology Act.

http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_action.htm

E-mail: action@cde.state.co.us

## Additional Resources from Colorado State Library

***How Librarians Help Children Achieve Standards: The Second Colorado Study <http://www.lrs.org/html/school_studies.html>***

The Library Research Service conducts studies related to libraries, literacy and learning. In May 2000 the LRS released a critical new study about school library media centers, library staff, and children's scores on standardized tests. The study shows that Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading scores increase with increases in the following characteristics of library media (LM) programs: LM program development, information technology, teacher/library media

specialist (LMS) collaboration, and individual visits to the library media center (LMC). In addition, as participation increases in leadership roles, so does collaboration between teachers and LMSs. The relationship between these factors and test scores is not explained away by other school or community conditions.

CSAP reading test scores increase with increases in:

- LMS hours per 100 students (7th grade)
- total staff hours per 100 students
- print volumes per student
- periodical subscriptions per 100 students
- electronic reference titles per 100 students (7th grade)
- library media expenditures per student

### *Information Technology*

Where networked computers link library media centers with classrooms, labs, and other instructional sites, students earn higher CSAP reading test scores.

### *Collaboration*

A central finding of this study is the importance of a collaborative approach to information literacy. Test scores rise in both elementary and middle schools as library media specialists and teachers work together. In addition, scores also increase with the amount of time library media specialists spend as in-service trainers of other teachers, acquainting them with the rapidly changing world of information.

### *Flexible Scheduling*

Students have greater freedom in middle school, and are often able to choose whether or not they visit their school's LMC and use the resources there or take them home. Choosing to visit the LMC as an individual, separate from a class visit, is also a strong indicator of higher test scores.

### *Indirect Effects*

While not having a direct effect on test scores, leadership involvement on the part of the library media specialist (LMS) has a strong impact on whether or not the LMS is working closely with teachers and students. At both elementary and middle school levels, the more the LMS is involved in school and library media professional activities, the higher the level of collaboration. Collaboration, in turn, does have a direct impact on test scores.

### *"Reading Tips for Parents" (English and Spanish) pamphlet <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/slreadtips.htm>*

This colorful, easy-to-understand pamphlet provides parents and caregivers plenty of help in reading readiness, reading to children, and age-appropriate ideas and techniques from birth to six years of age. It is available in English and Spanish versions. You may download the pamphlet from the Web site, or contact the Colorado State Library for copies. Call 303.866.6891, or E-mail mccune_b@cde.state.co.us.

***Reading Programs (Summer Reading, Teen Read Week)***
***<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/slrdindx.htm>***

Studies show that free, voluntary reading helps children maintain reading skills and probably even increases their skills. Each year the Colorado State Library sponsors a Summer Reading Program through public libraries. Schools are invited to participate and can use materials on the Web site for their own programs or simply cooperate with local public libraries to encourage students to get involved. Additional programs and promotions, such as Teen Read Week, are added to the site as they become available.

***Diversity Toolkit <http://projects.aclin.org/diversity/>***

The Diversity Toolkit was created to improve cultural awareness of key ethnic groups and enhance library services. It's a handy guide for teachers and students, too. It includes three main components. The calendar highlights and describes ethnic and cultural events, holidays, and the birthdays of notable persons of various ethnic backgrounds. The bibliography lists selected ethnic related resources in print, audiovisual and electronic formats. A set of 12 bookmarks highlight the monthly ethnic cultural events and book titles recommended for the month.

All materials are on PDF and can be downloaded for reproduction and distribution. Colorado's four ethnic populations addressed in the Diversity Took Kit are African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics.

***State Publications Library <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/slstpubs.htm>***

Colorado residents have convenient access to information produced by state government, as well as a source for answers about state information. This service is centralized in the State Publications Library, and many state government documents are available via interlibrary loan. Key publications are distributed to the 19 affiliated Depository Libraries around the state and also are available through interlibrary loan.

State publications are valuable sources of information published by state agencies such as annual reports, budgets, planning reports, newsletters, consumer information, legislative reports, and directories. They cover a wide variety of topics including health, business, education, crime, agriculture, mining, employment, taxes, water quality, wildlife, and the environment.

The State Publications Library catalogs online and Web publications as well as print. Staff periodically prepare bibliographies, such as the recent "School Research Topics." These free bibliographies, available online, offer links and ideas for many resources important in education.

***Colorado Talking Book Library <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/ctbl.htm>***

If students in the classroom are not able to enjoy books or magazines because they have a physical or reading disability that causes them to have difficulty in reading conventional print, they may receive help through this service. The Colorado Talking Book Library has recorded, Braille and large print materials that it sends free of charge to eligible Coloradans. The staff is happy to work with classroom teachers who need assistance for their students. Call 303/727-9277 or 800/685-2136, or E-mail ctbl.info@cde.state.co.us.

***Grants and Support <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/slstarfp.htm>***

Each year the Colorado State Library awards federal funds known as Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) to libraries throughout the state. Many of these are school media centers

working in cooperation with their schools, local public libraries, parent groups and others. Notices are sent each fall about the application deadline and process.

The Power Libraries project is another possible source of funding. (See attached one-page description.)

For other Colorado State Library resources, visit our Web site at ***http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_library.htm***

## Other Useful Internet Sites

American Library Association Services to Children, links to booklists, activities, promotions and other sites, including African American, Latino and general children's booklists. www.ala.org/alsc/

American Library Association site on teens, www.ala.org/teenread/

American Library Association teen site with book reviews, Internet guide, www.ala.org/teenhoopla/

Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature (Latino), www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLA/outreach_americas.html

Between the Lions, PBS educational show with related Web site, newsletter, free activities to download, www.pbs.org/wgbh/lions/index.html

Blue Spruce Award for young adult books, www.cla-web.org/bluespruce/

Children's Book Council, activities for parents and teachers and librarians, www.cbcbooks.org/

General social, community atmosphere and impact on reading skills (It's the Climate, Stupid!), www.trelease-on-reading.com/whatsnu_2.html

'New' bookstores, use techniques in schools (article), www.trelease-on-reading.com/whatsnu_4.html

Reading Is Fundamental, a national partnership, www.rif.org

US Dept of Education portal, for extensive, age-related tips for parents and care providers, www.ed.gov/inits/americareads

US Dept of Education site, Read*Write*Now, with English and Spanish resources, free posters, www.ed.gov/inits/americareads/readwnow.html

## Power Libraries: Linking School Library Media Programs and Standards to Student Achievement

*Helping promote student achievement through School Library Programs*

- grant monies and technical training
- collaboration
- staff development
- instructional connections

- partnerships
- collection funding
- flexible scheduling
- information literacy
- resources to meet colorado standards
- expand the role of the library in instruction

*Because school library programs DO impact academic achievement*

Since 1998 the *Power Libraries* project has:

- funded 45 schools in 24 school districts across the state
- involved over 30,000 students and 1,200 teachers and staff
- provided funds to purchase over 6,000 books for school libraries
- produced collaborative standards-based units
- instituted flexible library in scheduling in participating schools
- improved the information literacy →content standard link
- helped establish long-term planning and integration of the library program with instruction and assessment

Schools may participate as one of two library types:

**High Performance School Library**

A $2,000 honorarium is awarded to High Performance schools for use in library activities or program improvement. Each must meet the exemplary library criteria and agree to mentor one or more other schools.

**Mini-grant school library**

Each receives up to $5,000 for books and resources to help meet standards. Each school is paired with a High Performance school for on-going staff development assistance to implement desired changes in conjunction with overall school improvement planning.

**Focus on the Library Media Program and Instruction**

Partnerships between schools result in a year-long plan to integrate library instruction with content standards, build resources, improve instruction, increase library use, and develop collaborative team-teaching strategies to improve how students use the library for research and pleasure reading.

Participating schools are selected through a competitive application process.

For information, contact Gene Hainer, 303.866.6730, hainer_g@cde.state.co.us

http://cemacolorado.org/ ; deadline for applications mid-September

Funded by the Library Service and Technology Act 1998-2000

ado Virtual Library

presented by ACLIN

## Colorado Virtual Library

### What is the Colorado Virtual Library?

A handy, easy-to-use search tool for library resources on the Web. You can search multiple Colorado library catalogs, digitized Colorado collections of historical photographs, costumes, and fossils, and quality Web sites simultaneously.

### Who created the CVL?

The staff of the Colorado State Library, a division of the Colorado Department of Education.

### What does it cost to use the CVL?

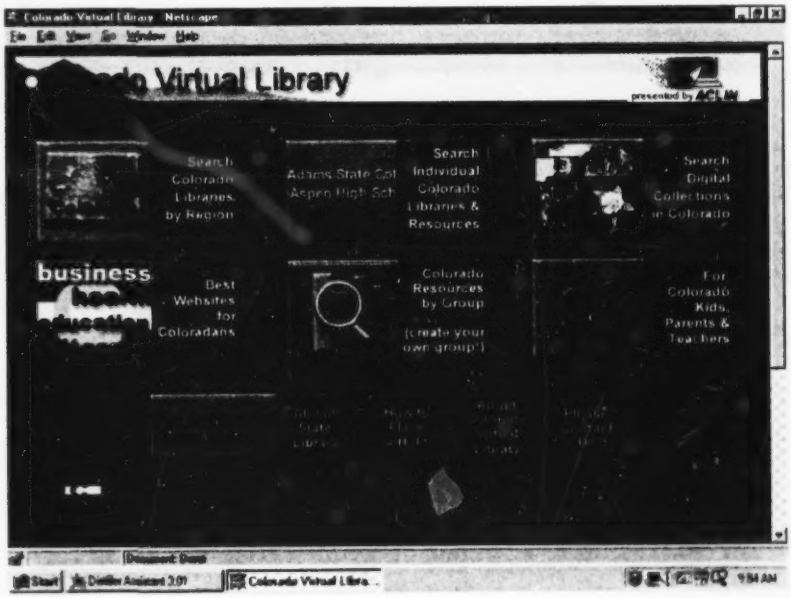
Use of the Colorado Virtual Library is absolutely free. All you need is a computer and Web access.

### How do I search the Colorado Virtual Library?

Through links on the first page, such as "Colorado Libraries by Region" or "Search Digital Collections." You may search multiple library catalogs, the digital collections, and best Web sites. You also may search by author, title, or keyword.

### How can I use the Colorado Virtual Library in the classroom?

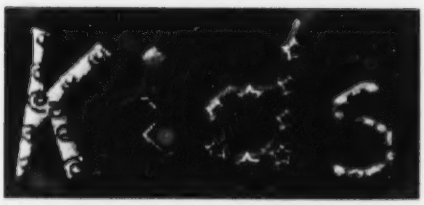
A special section called "For Colorado Children, Parents, and Teachers" includes a collection of Web sites selected specifically for use by K-12 students. You can search our database of these sites by subject, Colorado Educational Content Standard, and grade or reading level to find sites that children can use to complete assignments.


Virtual Library
presented by ACLIN
Search Colorado Libraries by Region
Search Individual Colorado Libraries & Resources
Search Digital Collections in Colorado
business
Best Websites for Coloradans
Colorado Resources by Group
(create your own group!)
For Colorado Kids, Parents & Teachers

For more information about the Colorado Virtual Library, visit www.aclin.org, contact the Colorado Virtual Library at 303.866.6939, or send us an E-mail at comments@aclin.org



BEST COPY AVAILABLE



**The Colorado Virtual Library announces a great resource for teachers, students, and parents.**

The Children' Colorado Virtual Library provides unbeatable resources to support K-12 education in Colorado. Visit www.aclin.org, and select "For Colorado Children, Parents, and Teachers."

The Children' Colorado Virtual Library is a search interface to over 6000 hand-selected Web sites chosen by librarians and school media specialists. The Children' Colorado Virtual Library is designed to be easy to use for K-12 students and a helpful planning and classroom aid for teachers.

Children can type in searches, browse an A-to- Z list of subjects, or view an outline of popular topics. Webs sites are summarized and annotated with:

Applicable Colorado educational standards and benchmarks added by

- local librarians
- reading levels
- hyperlinked subject entries

Colorado librarians are also annotating Web sites specific to Colorado, such as:

- Biographies of famous Coloradans
- Colorado flora and fauna
- Colorado state symbols
- Colorado history
- Colorado's native peoples

Librarians and teachers can simply click on the appropriate educational standard and subject heading that applies to each Web site. Sites have been selected to be entertaining or enlightening, as well as educational.

Please note that this site is not an Internet filter. It does not prevent Web browsers from being used to surf any URL address that the user enters. It is intended to guide users to good sites, not block them from "bad" sites.

For more information about the Colorado Virtual Library, visit www.aclin.org, contact the Colorado Virtual Library at 303.866.6939, or send us an E-mail at comments@aclin.org.

# Challenges in Building and Using Bodies of Evidence

Laura Benson

- **Time**

  Where can I find the time to assess all my students? When will I have time to look over all this information?

- **Management**

  How can I organize and handle all these bodies?

- **Contents**

  What should I collect?

- **Making teaching decisions**

  How can I use all this stuff to help me make teaching decisions?

- **Involving Students**

  How can my students help in building bodies of evidence?

- **Involving Parents**

  How can the parents of my students help in building bodies of evidence?

- **Audience/Lifespan**

  What happens to these next year? How do bodies of evidence help facilitate transitions? How does this information get shared with district administrators? CDE?

- **Weight**

  How much weight or importance should I give each piece of my students' body of evidence? Is one piece of data more important than another?

# Blessings, Promises, and Purposes for Building and Using Bodies of Evidence*

Laura Benson

**•Time, Management, and Contents Reflect Everyday Life**

Bodies of Evidence reflect what great teachers have always done. Most pieces of evidence are — and should be — regular classroom work and, thus, collected during the course of learning days. Best if B of E is not an event but a way of learning and teaching.

As teachers, we each find/develop a system of record keeping and organization all the paper trails of thinking — notebooks, file folders, district developed data folders or computer programs — to evaluate our students. Involving students is essential. Aim for consensus and lots of conversations as a team, school, and district to determine the what, when, where, and how of B of E.

**•Deeper Knowledge of Students as Readers**

Bodies of Evidence help us to know our students well and deeply as readers and thinkers revealing their strategies, behaviors, and passion for reading, as, together, we harvest artifacts of their thinking over time.

**•Honorable, Fair Judgment of Students**

Great teachers have always judged a child's reading progress with many pieces of information. No one assessment tool, day, or piece of data will determine a child's proficiency or destiny — a layered picture of a child's learning.

Our judgment of each child is confirmed. Teacher judgment still the best predictor/barometer of student success.

**•Building Confidence and Knowledge of Self as Reader**

The child has the opportunity to witness his or her growth and progress over time. Parents see their child's growth and progress with a thorough and detailed, and multi-faceted lens.

**•Teaching Decisions**

We can see patterns of strengths and needs which help us to make responsive teaching decisions — strategy focus, grouping, texts, timing.

**•Self Evaluation as Teachers**

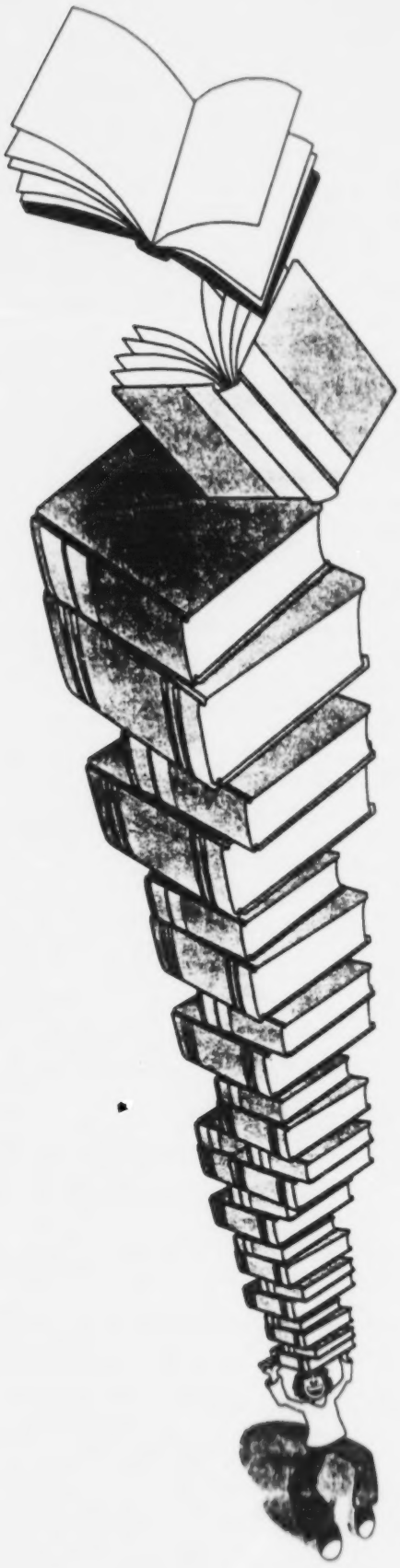
They help us gauge the effectiveness of our teaching.

**Building a Body of Evidence**

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence in order to document learning and growth. This daily, ongoing collection of data is often inseparable from instruction...Evaluation is the process of reflecting upon all the data we have collected. We should evaluate students based on both their own individual growth and in comparison to widely held expectations for their particular age group or grade level. In addition, we should help students learn how to evaluate and celebrate their own growth as learners. This "stepping back," in order to value or reflect upon learning and progress, is what separates evaluation from assessment.

From *Classroom Based Assessment* by Hill, Ruptic, and Norwick (1998)

* Adapted by Laura Benson with the permission of Bonnie Campbell Hill



# Appendix

Now that you have loads of assessment data, let's move to evaluation. Thinking about one of your students (or one group of your children), let's look at the information which you have harvested thus far.

### *Guiding Questions*

- What does this tell you about the child/children?
- What is the child learning?
- What are you learning about your teaching by examining this data?

DATA COLLECTED INSIGHTS

# Body of Evidence Data Analysis and Synthesis

Laura Benson

| Reader | Grade | Date |
|---|---|---|

**Passion/Joy/Motivation**

- Chooses to read
- Can identify favorite books/genres/authors

**Behaviors**

- Controls directional movement
- Points to words
- Self-corrects: returns to the beginning of line, goes back a few words-repeats the word only-reads to the end of the line
- Cross checking: ignores discrepancies, checks meaning/language with finger/eye, checks meaning with visual cues-makes meaning, visual, and grammar cues line up
- Repetitions
- Substitutions

**Word Strategies**

- attempts new words using-sounds-chunking_____

  initial letters
  final letters
  medial letters
  structural analysis
  root words; prefixes; suffixes-context clues-picture clues-syntax

- sight word vocabulary — many known words-minimal word well limiting fluency and understanding-reflects using b.k. for the English language or concepts of text

**Comprehending/Thinking Strategies**

- Monitors understanding (including reading repair/revision)-Has internalized and uses "Does this make sense?" or "I get it..."

  Rereads — cross checking

  Adjusts reading rate — skims and scans

- Using background knowledge

  Has internalized and uses "This reminds me of..."

  Connects reading to his or her life; connects reading to his or her knowledge of the world/content/concept, connects reading to other texts

  Uses b.k. for the reading process, genre, or author

  Refines b.k. from information in the text-Uses context clues to gain understanding of text and/or vocabulary

- Asks questions that aid meaning: has internalized and uses "I wonder..."

  Before reading, creates compass questions-during reading, creates more questions and working to answer questions

  After reading, works to answer self- generated questions

- Infers

  Has internalized and uses "I bet..." and "I knew it..."

  Makes predictions before and during reading-Able to figure out information not explicitly stated in text-Identifies themes and messages of text/author (esp. metaphor, symbolism, etc.)

- Determines importance

  Identifies important ideas or messages; uses "The most important point.."

  Draws conclusions

  Can compare and contrast-Identify author's purpose

  Recognizes author's point of view

- Synthesizes

  Uses language of story/text in retelling (oral or written)

  Identifies important ideas or events in retelling (oral or written)

  Sequentially retells story/text (oral or written)

- Visualizes/creates images

  Key: Highlight Strengths in blue -Talks about "I see..."

  Highlight Needs in red

## Body of Evidence Analysis

Based on Colorado Model Content Standards for Reading

| Standard | Evidence of Progress Toward Standard |
|---|---|
| *Student reads and understands a variety of materials.* | |
| *Student applies thinking skills to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.* | |
| *Student reads to locate, select, and use relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.* | |
| *Student reads and recognizes literature as a record of human experience.* | |

**Body of Evidence for ____Grade Readers**

| Standard | Assessment Tool |
|---|---|
| *Student reads and understands a variety of materials.* | |
| *Student applies thinking skills to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.* | |
| *Student reads to locate, select, and use relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.* | |
| *Student reads and recognizes literature as a record of human experience.* | |

**Body of Evidence for ___ Grade Readers**

| Standard | Assessment Tool |
|---|---|
| *Student reads and understands a variety of materials.* | |
| *Student applies thinking skills to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.* | |
| *Student reads to locate, select, and use relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.* | |
| *Student reads and recognizes literature as a record of human experience.* | |

## Analyzing Student Work

Laura Benson

**Student:** **Grade:** **Analysis Date**

**Nature of Difficulty**

- **Cueing systems**

- **Background knowledge**?
  Knowledge of the world
  Knowledge of the reading process
  Knowledge of genre and/or author
  Knowledge of self as reader

- **Knowledge of words/vocabulary**
  Sight word vocabulary
  Concepts/meaning
  Word strategies
  — strategies child uses

  — strategies child needs

- **Text/Genre?**

- **Comprehension strategies/thinking tools?**
  Monitoring and repairing reading
  Determining importance
  Using background knowledge
  Asking questions
  Inferring
  Synthesizing
  Visualizing/sensing

**Patterns Of Difficulty**

# Individual Reading Assessment Analysis Tools

## Individual Reading Inventories (IRI)

| Student: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading Strategies** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** |
| Monitors understanding | | | |
| Uses background knowledge | | | |
| Asks questions | | | |
| Infers | | | |
| Determines importance | | | |
| Synthesizes | | | |
| Creates sensory images/visualizes | | | |
| New word tools: | | | |
| • Uses first/last letters | | | |
| • Uses picture clues | | | |
| • Uses context clues | | | |
| • Uses: | | | |
| Demonstrates joy, passion, and purposes for reading | | | |
| Comments: | | | |

✓ = focus strategy/strategy taught

Adapted from Bonnie Campbell Hill, *Classroom Based Assessment*

## Reading Conference Record

| Student: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading Strategies** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** |
| Monitors understanding<br>• Rereads<br>• Metacognitive/ knows when he or she does/does not understand | | | |
| Uses background knowledge<br>• Makes connections from<br>– book to self<br>– book to book<br>– book to world | | | |
| Asks questions<br>• Generated compass questions and reading to answer these self questions<br>• Understands how to answer others' questions | | | |
| Infers | | | |
| Determines importance<br>• Fiction<br>• Nonfiction<br>• Poetry | | | |
| Synthesizes | | | |
| Creates sensory images/visualizes | | | |
| New word tools: | | | |
| • Uses first/last letters | | | |
| • Uses picture clues | | | |
| • Uses context clues | | | |
| • Uses: | | | |
| Demonstrates joy, passion, and purposes for reading | | | |

Adapted from Bonnie Campbell Hill, *Classroom Based Assessment*

## Reading Conference Record

| Student: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading Strategies** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** | **Date and Title** |
| Monitors understanding<br>• *I understand*<br>• *I don't understand* | | | |
| Uses background knowledge<br>• *This reminds me of*<br>• *A connection I am making here is* | | | |
| Asks questions<br>• *I wonder*<br>• *I found out*<br>• *I was curious and read to find answers to my question about* | | | |
| Infers<br>• *I bet*<br>• *I found out*<br>• *I was surprised to learn* | | | |
| Determines importance<br>• *I learned*<br>• *The most important ideas here are* | | | |
| Synthesizes<br>• *First, second, and last...*<br>• *In the beginning, middle, end...*<br>• Uses learning in a new setting | | | |
| Creates sensory images/visualizes<br>• *I see*<br>• *I sense/feel* | | | |

Adapted from Bonnie Campbell Hill, *Classroom Based Assessment*

## Thinking About My Reading Strategies (Student Interview)

| Student | Date | |
|---|---|---|
| Strategy | With Guidance | Indepen-dently |
| I choose books I can understand. | | |
| I have favorite books, authors, and genres. | | |
| I choose to read. I like to read. | | |
| I can stay focused and work hard while I read. | | |
| I use reading strategies to understand what I read. These include: | | |
| • I monitor my reading understanding. I do this by: | | |
| • I make connections when I read. | | |
| • I ask myself questions as I read. | | |
| • I can infer when the author doesn't tell me everything. | | |
| • I know how to figure out the important ideas/messages when I read. | | |
| • I can synthesize information when I read. | | |
| • I can retell what I read. | | |
| • I create my own video/movie when I read. | | |
| I do... | | |
| I use... | | |
| I can... | | |
| I can teach others about this: | | |

Adapted from Bonnie Campbell Hill, *Classroom Based Assessment*

## Proficient Reader Profile for IRIs: Narrative Passages

| Grade Level | ORI-II | Flynt-Cooter* | BRI |
|---|---|---|---|
| Beginning of 2nd | Level 1<br>Instructional | Level 2<br>Adequate | |
| Middle of 2nd | Level 1/2<br>Instructional | Level 2<br>Adequate | |
| End of 2nd | Level 2<br>Instructional | Level 3<br>Adequate | Level 3<br>Instructional |
| Beginning of 3rd | Level 2<br>Instructional | Level 3/4<br>Adequate | Level 3<br>Instructional |
| Middle of 3rd | Level 3<br>Instructional | Level 4<br>Adequate | Level 4<br>Instructional |
| End of 3rd | Level 4<br>*Instructional* | Level 5<br>*Adequate* | Level 5<br>*Instructional* |
| Beginning of 4th | Level 4<br>*Instructional* | Level 5<br>*Adequate* | Level 5<br>*Instructional* |
| Middle of 4th | Level 4<br>*Instructional* | Level 5<br>*Adequate* | Level 5<br>*Instructional* |
| End of 4th | Level 5<br>*Instructional* | Level 6<br>*Adequate* | Level 6<br>*Instructional* |
| Beginning of 5th | Level 5<br>*Instructional* | Level 6<br>*Adequate* | Level 6<br>*Instructional* |
| End of 5th | At least level 6, perhaps jr. high passages better reflect standards; study is needed. | | |

* Flynt-Cooter adequate = instructional

See Felknor, Gathering (2000). Use of Individual Reading Inventories with Fourth-Grade Students on Individual Literacy Plans. *Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 15-17*

## Analysis of IRI Data — 1

| Name | Comprehension | Strategies Used | Cue Use | Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

## Analysis of IRI Data — 2

| Name | Comprehension | Strategies Used | Cue Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Analysis of Running Records

When examining a child's running record, ask yourself:

| Cueing System | Notes@Student |
|---|---|
| **Meaning**<br>• Does the child use meaning?<br>• What does he or she do to check whether the material makes sense? | |
| **Syntax**<br>• Is what he or she said possible in an English sentence and syntactically appropriate? | |
| **Visual**<br>• Does he or she use visual information from the letters and words?<br>• from the text features?<br>• From the pictures? | |
| **Fluency**<br>• Does the reading convey meaning making (i.e., intonation, regarding punctuation by pausing, etc.)? | |
| **Comprehension check**<br>• Does the retell demonstrate understanding?<br>• Check for student's reference to<br>• main characters<br>• setting<br>• problem/plot<br>• sequencing events and/or<br>• important/main ideas as he or she retells story/text | |

Adapted from J. P. Roberts, Adams 12 Schools, 1999

# Should You Take An Oral Reading Sample?

Laura Benson

While oral reading samples can only capture an approximation or sample of a child's reading thinking, harvesting a sample of the child's reading as he or she reads text aloud to us can illuminate what children do as they read all by themselves. The caveat in taking oral reading samples is ensuring that you always include a comprehension check. Asking the child, "Tell me what you were thinking as you read this." or "What was that about?" or "Share what you were thinking as you read this piece," are a few examples of the prompts we can use to gauge a child's understanding (comprehension).

Peter Johnston framed the thinking behind using oral reading samples to know our students as individuals with these words from his book, *Knowing Literacy: Constructive Literacy Assessment* (1997)."Mature reading is generally done silently in the privacy of one's own head. This is not a problem for self-evaluation, but is poses a bit of a problem for teachers who wish to assess their students' reading... Oral reading has been used for many years to assess the kind of language processes taking place in the head of the reader. This assessment can be only estimate of the reader's mental processes, however. Oral reading and silent reading are not the same thing (Leu 1982; Schumm and Baldwin 1989). The two serve quite different functions for adults. Nonetheless, there is sufficient similarity between the two to make analyzing students' oral reading a useful way to understand the way they process language when they read."

**Resources**


Clay, Marie. (1993). **Observation Survey**.

Hill, Bonnie Campbell Hill. (1998). **Classroom Based Assessment**.

Johnston, Peter (1997). *Knowing Literacy: Constructive Literacy Assessment*.

Pinnell, Gay Su and Fountas, Irene. (1996). *Guided Reading*.

## Oral Reading Sample Window

**Evidence of _____'s reading strategies**

**Date:** **Grade:** **Teacher**

**Cueing systems**

- Applies word attack skills to read new and unfamiliar words (graphophonics)
- Uses sentence structure, paragraph structure, text organization, and word order (syntax)
- Uses and apply background, experience, and context to construct a variety of meanings over developmentally appropriate complex texts (semantics)
- Uses strategies of sampling, predicting, confirming, and self-correcting quickly, confidently, and independently (graphophonics, syntax, and semantics)

**Makes meaning as he or she reads:**

**Tenor of the reader's storytelling voice:**

**Child's passion/connections to reading and/or the text:**

## Rubric for Fluency Evaluation

Fountas and Pinnell, 1996

Student: Grade/Age:

Title of Text Read: Level:

Date:

Running Record (attached) (in file)

4 Read *primarily* in large meaningful phrases; fluent, phrased reading with a few word-by-word slow downs for problem solving; expressive interpretation is evident at places throughout the reading; attention to punctuation and syntax; rereading for problem solving may be present but is generally fluent.

3 A mixture of word-by-word reading and fluent, phrased reading (expressive interpretation); there is evidence of attention to punctuation and syntax; rereading for problem solving may be present.

2 *Mostly* word-by-word reading but with some two-word phrasing and even a couple of three- or four-word phrases (expressive interpretation); evidence of syntactic awareness of syntax and punctuation, although not consistently; rereading for problem solving may be present.

1 Very little fluency; *all word-by-word reading* with some long pauses between words; almost no recognition of syntax or phrasing (expressive interpretation);very little evidence of awareness of punctuation; perhaps a couple of two-word phrases but generally dysfluent; some word groupings awkward.

To show growth over time, record your notes in different color ink each semester you use this tool.

Other observations and comments:

# Talking about Student Work

Laura Benson

## Student Work Conversation Protocol

| Facilitator's Responsibility | Presenting Teacher's Responsibility | Responding Teacher's Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| ***Before the Conversation*** | | |
| **Conversation Coach**<br>• Establish purpose for conversation with teacher (i.e., teacher wants colleagues' insight about a puzzling student)<br>• Set time, day, and setting for conversation<br>• Arrange food for gathering<br>• Send invitations/notice of conversation to group | **Presenting Teacher**<br>• Establish purpose for conversation with coach<br>• Select student work to bring to the conversation (puzzling student, emergent reader)<br>• Make copies of the work for the group (if possible) or prepare examples of student work | **Responding Colleagues**<br>• Express a desire to engage in conversations<br>• Confirm participation |
| ***Beginning the Conversation*** | | |
| **Conversation Coach**<br>• Welcome everyone and state the purpose/focus of the conversation | **Presenting Teacher**<br>• Present student work, saying nothing (sometimes reading work — needs an oral presentation first) | **Responding Colleagues**<br>• Read or observe the work (i.e. video) in silence (possibly taking notes of their insights |
| ***Describing the Student Work*** | | |
| **Conversation Coach**<br>• Ask responding colleagues *What do you see?*, describing student work by thinking about what is *right there*, what the work reveals in telling us what the student can do | **Presenting Teacher**<br>• Listen to responding colleagues' comments and take notes, offering no further explanation | **Responding Colleagues**<br>• Offer answers and insights without making judgments about the quality of the work, teacher, or their personal preferences |
| ***Probing, Questioning, Speculating about the Student Work*** | | |
| **Conversation Coach**<br>• Guide the conversation to deeper analysis of the student work by asking, *What questions does this work raise for you?* After ample discussion, move the conversation forward by asking *What do you think the student is working on?* | **Presenting Teacher**<br>• Continue to listen and take notes. | **Responding Colleagues**<br>• State questions about the work, the child, the assignment, the learning environment, etc.<br>• Make suggestions about that the work reveals (i.e., student's current learning, breakthroughs, acquisition of focus strategies/skills |
| ***Hearing from the Presenting Teacher*** | | |
| **Conversation Coach**<br>• Invite presenting teacher to talk | **Presenting Teacher**<br>• Provide perspective on student's work, describing what he or she sees in it, responding to the questions raised, adding any other info that may be important to the group. Add any insights or surprises prompted by the respondents' observations and questions | **Responding Colleagues**<br>• Listen and say nothing (may take notes) |

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

| *Discussing Implications for Teaching/Learning* | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Conversation Coach** | **Presenting Teacher** | **Responding Colleagues** |
| • Invite everyone to share thoughts about their own teaching, children's learning, ways to support this child in the future | • Talk about next steps for this child and for other students in the class (if appropriate)<br>• Determine literacy goals for student | • Talk further about the student, offering next steps<br>• Translate discussion of this student's learning and teaching to a comparable student in their own groups of students |
| *Ending the Conversation* | | |
| **Conversation Coach** | **Presenting Teacher** | **Responding Colleagues** |
| • Lead the group in reflecting on their experience of or reactions to the conversation as a whole<br>• Discuss what they may take from the conversation to their teaching<br>• Thank everyone for their time and wisdom<br>• When appropriate, communication conversation efforts to students and parents<br>• May want to periodically include students and/or parents | • Offer reactions and goals met<br>• Collect student work samples (if confidential)<br>• Following the conversation, develop lessons for student and talk about literacy goals.<br>• Encourage student to develop a goal or two as well | • Offer reactions<br>• One colleague will volunteer to be next presenting teacher (optional) — may want to schedule regular conversations or may prefer that conversations evolve naturally from needs |

Adapted and inspired by the work of Steve Seidel, *Project Zero*, Harvard University

**Student Profile**

What is the child learning? What can the child do as a reader, thinker, writer?

| Student: | Presenting Teacher: |
|---|---|
| Grade and Age: | Date of Conversation: |
| **Strengths** | **Needs** |
| | |

**Next Steps**

| Now | Next | Later |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

## Possibilities for Student Work Conversations

Laura Benson

- Student work conversations
  - determining a child's strengths and needs
  - searching for standards acquisition
  - developing next steps for a puzzling student
  - clarifying expectations
  - facilitating articulation
- Body of evidence conversations
- Burning issues conversations
- Problem-solving conversations
- Same grade-level conversations
- Vertical team conversations
- Articulation conversations
- Consensus conversations
- Learning continuum conversations

**Any conversation can include**

- teachers
- students
- parents
- all of the above

**All conversations can grow from**

- reading student work
- oral presentation
- board members and voters
- single piece or multiple pieces
- videotape of work

## Opportunity to Learn

Laura Benson

In examining student work and making connections between this data (student learning) and instruction (teaching), it is critical to guide the conversations with a lens of "students' opportunity to learn" (Wolf, 1988, 1997). During conversations, we work together to understand whether the child is making progress and what is contributing to his or her success as a learner. One important consideration which I seek to evaluate as I analyze my students' bodies of evidence is the effectiveness of my teaching. As the Conversation Coach, it may be helpful in determining a child's opportunity to learn by discussing one or a few of the following questions asking the participants to provide evidence for their answers:

- Has this student been taught this skill, strategy or concept?
- Was there evidence along the way that this student was making progress toward this goal?
- Did the student receive support for learning at home?
- Were there resources available to this teacher/school to make learning possible?
- What contributed to this student's success?
- What made it difficult for this student to learn this skill, strategy or concept?
- Did the teacher...parents...administration have high expectations that this student would achieve success?
- Where there interventions in place to support this student's learning?
- Was the learning environment "a level playing field?"
- Were there:
  - gender considerations
  - family heritage considerations
  - health considerations

These are just a few conversation considerations. You will want to add your own ideas to this list.

### References

Wolf, Dennie Palmer. (1988). *Reading, Reconsidered: Literature and Literacy in High School.* New York, NY: The College Board.

Wolf, Dennie Palmer. (1997).

Standards and Assessments: New Approaches to Accountability (course). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

## Student Work Conversations: Guiding Questions

Laura Benson

To guide the conversation about student reading work, the **facilitator** may want to prompt the discussion with some of the following questions:

- What does the data tell us about this student as a reader?
- Discuss the evidence you see which proves that this student is growing as a reader and making progress toward the standards.
- Does this child like to read? How do you know? Does the child choose to read?
- Does the child read widely from varied genres?
- How does the child see himself/herself as a reader?
- What patterns do you see in this body of evidence/data?...patterns of strengths?...patterns of needs?...irregular patterns (inconsistent performance over time)?
- For discussion about student work in Guided Reading Lessons:
  - Is the child understanding what he or she reads?
  - What supports this child understanding?-Is the child reading text within his or her ZPD?
  - What prereading considerations are needed for this reader?(introduction, setting the scene, word work, etc.).
  - What evidence do you see that this child is becoming a self-extending reader?...cross checking?
  - What evidence do you see that this child is employing comprehension strategies effectively? Which strategies are strengths? Which strategies represent a need?

*Making Teaching Decisions and Developing Next Steps for Learning*

- How can this data guide our instruction?
- By examining this student's work, what teaching decisions can you make? What can you do to help this child become a stronger, more strategic reader?

**What I Learned About Myself as a Reader and Writer as I Studied my Body of Evidence**

| |
|---|
| As a **reader**, here are three things I can do: |
| **1.** |
| **2.** |
| **3.** |
| I want to learn to do this next: |
| and I will learn this by: |
| As a **writer**, here are three things I can do: |
| **1.** |
| **2.** |
| **3.** |
| I want to do this next: |
| and I will learn this by: |

## Glossary

**authentic text**: written materials which are used in daily living (i.e., literature, letters, computer manuals, newspapers, content textbooks, etc.)

**body of evidence**: a collection of student data gathered over time which documents a student's performance level; a kindred spirit to portfolios as profiled in Nancie Atwell's *In The Middle* and through the work of Jane Hansen and Bonnie Campbell Hill.

See *Implementing the Colorado Basic-Literacy Act* (1998) for more information.

**CBLA**: the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, House Bill 96 — 1139; the preamble to this act states: "It is the intent of the General Assembly that, after third grade, no pupil may be placed at a grade level or other level of schooling that requires literacy skills not yet acquired by the pupil." It is important to note, however, that the CBLA is not a retention bill. Instead, the act makes three promises to the citizens of Colorado:

Colorado educators will work in partnership with parents to teach all students to read by the end of third grade. To that end, educators routinely assess student progress toward proficiency in reading. Schools will provide intensive reading instruction for students who need additional help. Please refer to *Implementing The Colorado Basic Literacy Act* (1998) for more information and details.

**cloze passages**: a measure of reading comprehension in which the tenth word in the text is left out/deleted. Students are asked to predict the word that best fits in the blank. Their reading comprehension is based on the quality of their predictions.

**Colorado state reading standards**: statements from Colorado Content Standards focused on reading that define what a student should know and be able to do in order to be proficient in reading.

**comprehension**: a process by which readers construct meaning from written communication.

**continuum**: a visual representation of the stages of learning development in a particular area; specific descriptors provide a framework for assessing individual growth; also called developmental continuums.

**cueing systems**: various strategies that readers use to gain meaning from print. The major cueing systems are meaning (sometimes referred to as semantics), visual/ graphophonics, and syntax.

**expository text**: text which is nonfiction; text that explains.

**frustration level**: a readability or grade level of material that is too difficult to be read successfully by a student, even with normal classroom instruction and support. Although suggested criteria for determining a student's frustration reading level vary, less than 90 percent accuracy in word identification and less than 50 percent comprehension are often used as standards.

**genre**: type of writing; categorizing writing by kinds or types (i.e., picture books, novels, mysteries, biographies, poetry, reports, letters, etc.).

**graphophonics**: the cueing system that refers to the sound-symbol relationship; includes phonics.

**guided reading**: small group reading instruction which incorporates teacher modeling, text introduction, student independent reading of text, and response with flexible, responsive and temporary grouping practices; provides a bridge between shared and independent reading.

**independent reading level**: the readability or grade level of material that is easy for a student to read with few word-identification problems and high comprehension. Although suggested criteria vary, better than 99 percent word-identification and better than 90 percent comprehension are often used as standards in judging if a reader is reading at this level.

**individual reading assessments and inventories**: Individual reading assessments and inventories (IRA and IRI) engage a teacher and student in a one on one assessment in which the child demonstrates his ability to comprehend a short text (one to two pages) or a book. Often, an oral reading is also part of these assessments. As profiled in Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (May, 1998), individual reading inventories include The Flynt-Cooter Reading Inventory for the Classroom, the Qualitative Reading Inventory, and the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory. Individual reading assessments include the former named assessments and other individually administered assessments such as the Developmental Reading Assessment by Joetta Beaver and Marie Clay's Observation Survey. Conferring with students and/or taking a running record are additional ways one could engage in an individual reading assessment of a student.

**instructional reading level**: the reading ability or grade level of material that is challenging, but not frustrating for the student to read successfully with normal classroom instruction and support. Although suggested criteria vary, better than 95 percent word-identification accuracy and better than 75 percent comprehension are often used as standards in judging whether a student is reading at this level.

**integration of cueing systems**: the ability to select and simultaneously use meaning, syntax, and graphophonics to understand text.

**leveled books**: a set of books which have been assigned to positions along a gradient or continuum of difficulty (see Matching Books to Reads by Fountas and Pinnell and Hill's upcoming continuum book from Christopher Gordon); using a criteria profiled by Barbara Petersen in Bridges to Literacy, text difficulty is determined by several considerations (such as size of font, predictability of print on page, repeated language, etc.).

**literacy**: the integration and application of reading, writing, speaking, listening, technological, and mathematical skills to construct meaning, think critically, and solve problems. Children, youth, and adults must have these skills to be able to function successfully within community, family, school, and the workplace.

**miscue analysis**: a method of gaining insight into a student's thinking by analyzing the errors or deviations from text made during reading.

**narrative text**: text which tells a story.

**onset-rime**: syllables with consonants before the vowel that are often followed by a consonant (examples: wed, tie, time, rock).

**performance levels**: indications of a student's ability to read and gather information from authentic text of increasing difficulty levels.

**phonemic awareness**: awareness that spoken words are made up of a combination of sounds

**phonics: the relationship** between sounds and letters.

**phonological awareness**: awareness of the way sounds work within words.

**proficiency level**: the level of performance that indicates a student is competent at reading and gathering information from authentic text of increasing difficulty levels.

**reading assessment instruments and tools**: the means of determining a student's reading proficiency level; for the purpose of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, these instruments need to refer to Colorado Content Standards.

**reading standards**: (see Colorado state reading standards)

**semantics**: the cueing system that refers to the meaning of language; the information on the page which prompts meaning; the "M" in coding for running record miscues and self corrections.

**stages of reading development**: there are various approaches to reading development; for the CBLA, reading development is viewed through three stages: emergent, early, and fluent. Each stage is described as follows:

*emergent reader*: student is developing concepts about print, learning that text and illustrations convey meaning, and understanding letter-sound relationships

*early reader*: student is developing reading strategies and beginning to integrate strategies to gain meaning from print and using visual information (graphophonics and sight words) along with meaning (semantics) and the structure of language (syntax) to read short passages of text that are well supported by pictures

*fluent reader*: student is achieving independence in reading by integrating meaning, structure/syntax, and visual graphics to comprehend more complex text, including a variety of genres/written communications (i.e., fiction, newspapers, nonfiction, poetry, letters, etc.)

See also Bonnie Campbell Hill's work on developmental reading continuums in *Classroom Based Assessment* (1998) and her upcoming Continuum book.

**strategies:** 1) our in-the-head plans and ways of understanding what we read; our thinking behaviors which make it possible for us to understand the written word; 2) instructional techniques employed by teachers.

**syntax**: the cueing system that refers to how language is structured; includes word order, punctuation, and grammar; the "S" in coding for running record miscues and self corrections.

**visual cues**: the cueing system that refers to the sound-symbol relationship of our language; the "V" in coding for miscues and self corrections in running records; also referred to as visual/graphophonics or graphophonics.

**voice-print match**: the one-to-one match between oral reading and the words of a text (i.e., beginning readers are able to point to each word when spoken)

**Sources**

Colorado Department of Education. (1998). Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. Denver, Colorado.

Harris, T. and Hodges, R. (1995). The Literacy Dictionary. Newark, DE: IRA.

Hill, B., Ruptic, C., and Norwick, L. (1998). Classroom Based Assessment. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

## Bibliography

The following titles are cited throughout *Colorado Reads!* and/or are included here to provide our readers with practical suggestions and models of instruction to address student literacy needs and honor their strengths.


Allen, Janet. (2000). Words, Words, Words: Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4 — 12. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Allington, Richard. (1998). Teaching Struggling Readers. Newark, DE: IRA.

Allington, Richard and Walmsley, S. (1995). No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America's Elementary Schools. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Baskwill, Jane, and Whitman, Paulette. (1997). Every Child Can Read: Strategies and Guidelines for Helping Struggling Readers. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Beaver, Joetta. (1997). Developmental Reading Assessment. Glenview, IL: Celebration Press.

Benson, Laura. (2000). Going On Rounds: Talking About Student Work. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 9 — 14.

Benson, Laura (1996). Intellectual Invitations: Helping Readers Grow With Grouping Practices. Colorado Reading Council Journal 7, 18-41.

Bridges, Lois. (1995). Assessment: Continuous Learning. York, MA: Stenhouse.

Button, Linda and May, Jeannie. (2000). A Teacher-Friendly Assessment for Kindergarten. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 18 — 22.

California Reading Association. (1996). Building Literacy: Making Every Child A Reader. Costa Mesa, CA.

Cambourne, Brian. (1984). Language, Learning, and Literacy. Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby.

Carr, Janine. (1999). A Child Went Forth. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, Marie. (1993). An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cohn, Jody, Miller, Debbie, and Goudvis, Anne. (1997). Becoming Thoughtful Readers: Comprehensive Instruction in a Reader's Workshop. Colorado Reading Council Journal 8, 38 — 42.

Colorado Department of Education. (1998). Implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education.

Conrad, Lori. (1997). Exploring Informational Text with Students. Colorado Reading Council Journal 8, 4-11.

Conrad, Lori, and Shanklin, Nancy. (1999). Using Miscues to Understand Students' Reading. Colorado Reading Council Journal 10, 21-32.

Cooper, J. David. (1997). Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.

Cunningham, P. and Allington, R. (1999). Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read and Write. New York, NY: Longman.

Daniels, Harvey. (1994). Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student Centered Classroom. York, ME: Stenhouse.

DeFord, D.E., Lyons, C., and Pinnell, G.S. (1991). Bridges To Literacy: Learning from Reading Recovery. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Felknor, Catherine. (2000). Use of Individual Reading Inventories with Fourth-Grade Students on Individual Literacy Plans. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 15 — 17.

Felknor, Catherine, and Winterscheidt, Vicky. (1998). Classroom Implications from the Multi-District QRI-II Norming Study. Colorado Reading Council Journal.

Felknor, Catherine, Winterscheidt, Vicky, and Benson, Laura. (1999). Thoughtful Use of Individual Reading Inventories. Colorado Reading Council Journal 10, 10 — 20.

Flynt, E.S. and Cooter, R.B. (1998). Flynt-Cooter Reading Inventory for the Classroom. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Fountas, Irene, and Pinnell, Gay Su. (1996). Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children. Portsmouth, MA: Heinemann.

Fountas, Irene, and Pinnell, Gay Su. (1999). Matching Books to Readers. Portsmouth, MA: Heinemann.

Glazer, Susan Mandel. (1998). Assessment IS Instruction: Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Phonics for ALL Learners. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Hagerty, Patricia, Foster, Ann, and Huston, Priscilla. (2000). An Examination of Early Intervention Reading Programs. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 31 — 36.

Harvey, Stephanie. (1998). Nonfiction Matters. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Harvey, Stephanie and Goudvis, Anne. (2000). Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Harwayne, Shelley. (2000). Going Public: Priorities and Practice at the Manhattan New School. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harwayne, Shelley. (1992). Lasting Impressions: Weaving Literature Into The Writing Workshop. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harwayne, Shelley. (2000). Lifetime Guarantees: Toward Ambitious Literacy Teaching. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Johnson, N. and Noe, Kathleen. (1995) (second edition in press). Literature Circles and Responses. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Hill, Bonnie Campbell, Ruptic, Cynthia, and Norwick, Lisa. (1998). Classroom Based Assessment. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

Hindley, Joanne. (1996). In The Company of Children. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Hoyt, Linda. (1999). Revisit, Reflect, Retell: Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hoyt, Linda. (2000). Snapshots: Literacy Minilessons Up Close. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

International Reading Association. (2000). Position Papers: Teaching All Children to Read (various titles). Newark, DE.

Johns, Jerry. (1997). Basic Reading Inventory. Dubuque, IO: Kendall Hunt Publishers.

Johnston, Peter. (1997). Knowing Literacy: Constructive Literacy Assessment. York, MA: Stenhouse.

Krashen, Stephen. (1993). The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Learning Media. (1996). Reading for Life: The Learner as Reader. Wellington, New Zealand.

Learning Media. (1993). Reading in the Junior Classes. Wellington, New Zealand.

Leslie, L. and Caldwell, J. (1995). Qualitative Reading Inventory — Second Edition. New York, NY: Harper Collins College Publishers.

Mariotti, Arleen, and Homan, Susan. (1997). Linking Reading Assessment to Instruction: An Application Worktext For Elementary Classroom Teachers. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Miles, Betty. (1995). Hey! I'm Reading! New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Mooney, Margaret. (1990). Reading To, With, and By Children. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owens.

Morrison, Ian. (1994). Getting It Together: Linking Reading Theory to Practice. Lower Hutt, New Zealand: The Wright Group.

Morrison, Ian. (1994). Keeping It All Together. Lower Hutt, New Zealand: The Wright Group.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1980). The Six Traits of Writing. Beaverton, OR: NREL.

Opitz, Michael. (1998). Flexible Grouping in Reading. Scholastic.

Opitz, Michael. (1998). Good-bye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, Gay Su, and Fountas, Irene. (1998). Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Quate, Stevi. (2000). CSAP: A Dance In The Making. The Colorado Communicator, Vol. 23, No. 3, 16 — 22. Lakewood, CO: CCIRA.

Rhodes, Lynn, and Dudley-Marling, Curt. (1996). Reading and Writers With A Difference (second edition). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rhodes, Lynn. (1993). Literacy Assessment: A Handbook of Instruments. Portsmouth, MA: Heinemann.

Rhodes, Lynn, and Shanklin, Nancy. (1993). Windows Into Literacy: Assessing Learners K-8. Portsmouth, MA: Heinemann.

Robb, Laura. (1996). Reading Strategies That Work: Teaching Your Students to Become Better Readers. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Routman, Regie. (1999). Conversations. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Routman, Regie. (1996). Literacy at the Crossroads. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Siu-Runyan, Yvonne. (2000). Give Me An Effective Teacher, Not the Promises of a "One Size Fits All" Program. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 23 — 27.

Snow, Catherine, Burns, M. Susan, and Griffin, Peg, editors. (1998). Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Taberski, Sharon. (2000). On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3. York, ME: Stenhouse.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Taylor, K. and Walton, S. (1998). Children at the Center: A Workshop Approach to Standardized Test Preparation. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Tovani, Cris. (2000). I Read It, But I Don't Get It. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Walker, Barbara. (1992). Supporting Struggling Readers. Portsmouth, MA: Pippin (Heinemann).

Watson, D. (1997). Beyond Decodable Texts — Supportive and Workable Literature. Language Arts, 74(8), 635-641.

Weaver, Constance. (1998). Practicing What We Know: Informed Reading Instruction. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Weaver, Constance, Gillmeister-Krause, Lorraine, and Vento-Zogby, Grace. (1996). Creating Support for Effective Literacy Education. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Western Australian Education Department. (1997). First Steps: Reading Resource Book. Melbourne, Australia: Longman.

Wilcox, Carol. (2000). The CSAP Effect: Some Reflections on Assessment and Curriculum. Colorado Reading Council Journal 11, 4 — 8.

Wilhelm, J. (1996). You Gotta Be The Book. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Professional Journals for Literacy Educators:

Colorado Communicator, Colorado Council of IRAYvonne Siu-Runyan, Editor

Colorado Reading Council JournalPatricia Hagerty, Editor

Language Arts, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)Sharon Murphy and Curt Dudley-Marling, Co-Editors

New Advocate, Christopher Gordon

Primary Voices K-6, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)Kate Wall, Editor

Reading Research Quarterly, International Reading Association (IRA)

The Reading Teacher, International Reading Association (IRA) Priscilla Griffith, Editor

***Informative Web Sites***

American Library Association http://www.ala.org/

Arapahoe Library District http://www.arapahoelibraries.org

Assessment: //K12Assess-L@lisrva.cua.edu

Best Practices in Reading and Writing http://pec.jun.alaska.edu/consortia/lit/reading.html

Caldecott http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.html

Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site http://www.carolhurst.com

CELA, National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement http://cela.albany.edu/

Center for Language in Learning http://www.learningrecord.org/lrorg

Chicago Public Schools http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/Ideas_and_Rubrics/

Children's Book Council Online http://www.cbc.org/navigation/teaindex.htm

CIERA, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement http//www.ciera.org/

Collaborative Assessment Conversations/Student Work Conversations
http://www. aisr.brown.edu/html/NSRF/cfg_p1.html
http://aisr.brown.edu/html/ACPBCaseStudies/html
http://www.tc.columbia.edu/~ncrest
http://www.essentialschools.org http://pzweb.harvard.edu
http://pzweb.harvard.edu/Research/Evidence.htm

Colorado Department of Education, English-Language Arts Listserv
http://ela@web.cde.state.co.us

Colorado Department of Education http://www.cde.state.co.us

Denver Public Schools http://curriculum.denver.k12.co.us/standards/

ERIC http://ericnet.net/

Four Blocks http://www.teachers.net/FAQ/column.html

Index to Children's Book Authors and Illustrators
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/biochildhome.htm

International Reading Association http://reading.org/

Jefferson County Schools http://jeffco.k12.co.us/isu/langarts/bklst.html.

Learning Disabilities/Differences http://www.ldonline.org/

Leveled Bookshttp://LeveledBooks.comhttp://www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/readlist.html

Maryland Assessment Consortium http://mac.cl.k12. MD.US.2000

McREL http://www.mcrel.org/resources/links/

Michigan State University http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) http://nces.ed.gov/practioners/teacher_support/

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) http://www.ncte.org/

Newbery http://www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.html

New York Public Library http://nypl.org/branch/children/third2.htm

New York Times Book Review http://nytimes.com/books

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory http://www. nwrel.
org/cnorse/booklets/educate/toc.html

Reading Online (IRA) http://www.readingonline.org/home.html

Standards and Assessment Resource Bank http://www.aclin.org/sarb/

Strategic Literacy Initiative (West Ed Lab) http://www.wested.org/stratlit/

Strategic Teaching and Reading Project (North Central Regional Education Lab)
http://www.ncrel.org/strp/Strp.htm

21st Century Learning Initiativehttp://www.21learn.org

Western Michigan University http://toread.com/whole/html